SCULPTURES OF GANGA-YAMUNA VALLEY

MIHIR MOHAN MUKHOPADHYAY

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PREFACE

The present work comprised the major part of my thesis entitled *Sculptures of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley* (*c. A.D. 750-1200*), accepted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Calcutta. I would like to record my deep sense of gratitude and respect in the memory of my great teacher late Professor S.K. Saraswati, under whose supervision, advice and suggestion the present work was carried out.

The study ventured to make a comprehensive and systematic survey of the medieval sculptures of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley region, very little work on which has been done before. Gaṅga-Yamunā Valley, the hub of Indian history and culture since the early times, also played a very important and interesting role in the early medieval and medieval phases of ancient India. Both from the qualitative and quantitative points of view the sculptural objects available from the region are no less insignificant. For obvious reasons it was not possible to incorporate all of them in the present work. The approach of my study was to make an objective analysis of the findings on an evolutionary plane. I am fully conscious of my limitations. Hence, I bear the entire responsibility for any lapses and shortcomings.

In the preparation of this work I have received help, advice and encouragement in various forms from my friends and well-wishers. It is a pleasure to offer my warmest thanks to all of them, especially to Dr. A.K. Bhattacharyya of Calcutta University, Mr. M.A. Dhaky, Research Director, American Institute of Indian Studies, Benaras, Prof. B.N. Mukherjee of Calcutta University and Mrs. Reba Sarkar of Calcutta.

I would like to acknowledge, not certainly in a formal way, the kindness and cooperation of the authorities of the different Museums

for not only supplying me the necessary photographs for the illustrations in my work, but also providing me the proper facilities for the study of the objects in their respective collections or in the Stores. I am overwhelmed by the gesture and cooperation of Mr. V.A. Nambiar, Administrative Director, American Institute of Indian Studies, Benaras by providing me the prints of the photographs from their Archives.

Last but not the least in importance, I am extremely grateful to Mr. Shakti Malik of Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, whose interest and initiative practically made the publication possible.

Department of History
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Śrīpañchamī, January 1982

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is indebted to the following Museums and Institutions for permission to use the illustrations included in this work. The author gratefully acknowledges this and expresses his sincere thanks to all of them.

Allahabad Museum, Allahabad
American Institute of Indian Studies, Benaras
Archaeological Survey of India, Museums Branch, Calcutta
Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi
Asiatic Society, Calcutta
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras
Indian Museum, Calcutta
Lucknow State Museum, Lucknow
Mathura Museum, Mathura
National Museum, New Delhi
Sarnath Museum, Benaras

ABBREVIATIONS

ASR	*Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report*
Cat. No.	*Catalogue Number*
EI	*Epigraphica Indica*
History, IV, *Kanauj*	*The History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. IV, The Age of Imperial Kanauj*
History, V, *Struggle*	*The History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. V, The Struggle for Empire*
IA	*Indian Antiquary*
JASB	*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta
JISOA	*Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Calcutta
JOIB	*Journal of the Oriental Institute*, Baroda
KM	*Kāvyamīmāṁsā* of Rājaśekhara, edited by C.D. Dalal and R.A. Sastry, 3rd ed. (GOS)
MASI	*Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*
Survey, 1st ed.	*A Survey of Indian Sculpture*, 1st edition, by S.K. Saraswati
Survey, 2nd ed.	*A Survey of Indian Sculpture*, 2nd edition, by S.K. Saraswati

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INTRODUCTION

Some work has been done on the stylistic evolution of Indian sculpture from the earliest times upto the Gupta period, but very little is available on sculpture of post-Gupta age. Chapters on medieval sculpture are usually included in books on Indian sculpture, but none of them can be considered exhaustive. The post-Gupta, pre-medieval and medieval phases of Indian history are characterised by the growth of awareness about regionalism in political as well as cultural spheres leading to erosion of the high idealism of Gupta culture and arts. As a consequence, the artistic movements in the different regional areas gradually fanned apart, leading to the emergence of local styles. In order to understand the basic impulses and surges in the evolution of cultural trends through the post-Gupta epoch it is necessary to study regional styles in detail and depth. Some such study, however, has been accomplished in Pāla-Sena sculpture,[1] Eastern Indian school of medieval sculpture,[2] Cōḻa sculpture and the art of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas[3] etc. But no serious effort seems to have been made for unravelling the varied wealth of most other well marked regional schools.

Medieval sculpture of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley may be considered one such manifestation of a regional style, indeed of startling significance. Kramrisch,[4] Ray,[5] and Saraswati,[6] however, laid the foundations of such a work upon which a detailed study can now be attempted. The works mentioned above have been generally useful for understanding the distinctions between one style and the other in the total Indian perspective. Nevertheless, a comprehensive study of the different regional styles could considerably enlarge our knowledge on Indian sculpture of the medieval epoch. An attempt, therefore, has been made in the following pages specifically to study the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley style of medieval sculpture, historically tracing the development of the style.

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TOPOGRAPHY

India had been demarcated by our ancient writers into five great divisions with Madhyadeśa as the focal point. The *dhruvā madhyamā pratiṣṭhā diś* of the later Vedic literature[1] came to be known subsequently under the common designation of Madhyadeśa or the 'middle region'. This middle region is known to have played a significant role in the growth and spread of civilisation from a very early age. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* places the realms of the Kurus and the Pāñcālas, the Vasas and the Uśīnaras in this *dhruvā madhyamā pratiṣṭhā diś* indicating thereby that the territory from the upper reaches of the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā to the confluence of the two rivers at Prayāga signified the constitution of this division at that time. The country of the Aryans, which is practically identical with the country known as Madhyadeśa, is described in the *Dharmasūtra* of Baudhāyaṇa[2] as lying to the east of the region where the river Sarasvatī vanishes to the west of Kālakavana which is identified with a tract somewhere near Prayāga, to the north of the Pāripātra, and to the south of the Himālayas. This had led Law[3] to suggest that the eastern boundary of Madhyadeśa not only excluded Bengal but also Bihar. Manu[4] clearly defines Madhyadeśa as extending from the Himālayas in the north to the Vindhyas in the south, and from the Vinaśana in the west to Prayāga in the east. *Purāṇas*[5] also follow this scheme. Though they are silent about its exact limits, by the descriptions of the people living in the respective divisions, they support more or less the definition of Madhyadeśa as given by Manu.

The Buddhists also maintain the traditional scheme of five-fold division of India. But their conception of the middle region or *Majjhima deśa* is much larger. The boundaries of *Majjhima deśa* as given in the *Mahāvagga*[6] may be described as having extended in the east to the town of Kajañgala identified with *Ka-chu-wo-ki-lo* of Hiuen Tsang.[7] Beyond this lay the city of Mahāśala, in the south-east to the river Salalāvati (Sarasvatī), in the south to the town of Sata-

karṇika, in the west to the Brāhmaṇa district of Thuna (Sthānīśvara or Thāneśvara), in the north to the Uśīradhvyaja (Uśīragiri) mountain. The *Divyāvadāna*,[8] however, extends the eastern boundary of *Majjhima deśa* still further to the east, so as to include even Puṇḍravardhana.

The concept of the region of Madhyadeśa appears to have undergone a change by the time of Rājaśekhara,[9] who restricts the eastern limit of Madhyadeśa to Vārāṇasī.

In the context of the present study, "Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley" means the flat riverine plain down below the Himālayan foot-hills and above the Vindhyan spurs, from the upper reaches of the two rivers (Gaṅgā and Yamunā) in the west to Vārāṇasī in the east.

The territory constitutes a cogent entity—geographically as well as culturally. Inside Northern India (ancient Āryāvarta) this region has been instrumental in guiding main currents of history throughout the ages. During the medieval period it has witnessed significant developments in various spheres of culture. The hub of this vast stretch of riverine plain has been known as "Gaṅgā-Yamunā doab" lying between the upper reaches and the confluence of the two rivers. In early times this tract was distinguished as "*Antarvedī*".[10]

Historical Background

After the fall of the Guptas in the second half of the sixth century A.D. there arose, almost simultaneously, three ruling dynasties in Northern India, namely, the Maukharis with Kanauj as their capital, the later Guptas in the east and Puṣyabhūtis in the west. The Maukharis under Īśānavarmā emerged as the undisputed masters of Madhyadeśa. With their eastern and western neighbours they maintained, despite occasional conflicts, friendly relations. The family had matrimonial ties with the later Guptas as well as the Puṣyabhūtis. It is the Puṣyabhūti alliance of the Maukharis that led to significant consequences for Northern India by about the beginning of the seventh century A.D.

After the disastrous defeat and death of the Maukhari ruler Grahavarmā due to the joint expedition of Devagupta of Mālava and Śaśāṅka of Gauḍa, the Puṣyabhūtis had to intervene in the affairs of Kanauj on behalf of Grahavarmā's consort Rājyaśrī, who was a

Puṣyabhūti princess. Rājyavardhana of the Puṣyabhūti family and after his untimely end his younger brother Harṣavardhana made efforts to rescue their sister who was taken captive by the investors of Kanauj. The political tangle ended ultimately in Harṣavardhana gaining sovereignty over the kingdom of Kanauj (*ka-no-kü-she* of Hiuen Tsang). With Kanauj as his metropolis, Harṣavardhana succeeded in building up an empire in Northern India, and, though scholars disagree on the extent of his empire, he was acknowledged as the master of the whole of Uttarāpatha (*sakal-ottarāpatha-nātha*)[11] by his southern rival, the Cālukya Pulakeśī II.

The empire built by Harṣavardhana, however, broke up not long after his death. Kanauj's status of an imperial metropolis remained uncontested, a fact which governed the course of subsequent history of Northern India.[12]

Yaśovarmā, a ruler of Kanauj in the first half of the eighth century A.D., could retain the imperial prestige of the city of Kanauj but his attempts to reconstitute the old imperial domains were, however, foiled by Lalitāditya Muktāpiḍa, the valorous ruler of Kāśmīra.

In the middle of the eighth century A.D. a new political set-up in Northern India developed in the shape of a number of dynasties with imperial ambitions. They were the Gurjara-Pratīhāras in the west, the Pālas in the east and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas in the Deccan. The rise of these three powers resulted in a 'triangular contest', seemingly for the possession of Kanauj, the insignia of imperial stature and prestige. In that struggle fortune had favoured different parties on different occasions.[13] It is not exactly easy to follow the details because of apparently conflicting statements in the epigraphic records of the contending powers.

Ultimately, after a prolonged struggle with the Pālas and Rāṣṭrakūṭas, the Pratīhāras under Bhoja could establish their authority over wide areas in the north and western parts of India and settled at Kanauj as the seat of their power. Kanauj more or less maintained its status of an imperial metropolis, retained as it was till the Muslim reduced it to ruins in the eleventh century.

The Pratīhāra emperor Bhoja had a long reign of forty-six years (*c.* A.D. 836-882). At the height of his power he controlled a vast

territory stretching from Kāśmīra (except Kara) in the west, through the Punjab in the north-west, to the Himālayas in the north, Gorakhpur in the east, and Bundelkhaṇḍ region in the south. He succeeded in raising up a mighty imperial fabric in North India for which his predecessors had tried in vain.

Mahendrapāla, son and successor of Bhoja, seems to have lost a part of the territory to Śaṅkaravarmā of Kāśmīra.[14] Otherwise he maintained the Pratīhāra dominion intact and even extended further towards the east, perhaps to compensate the loss in the north-west. As many as seven of his records testify to his rule in Magadha and even over a part of North Bengal, the home of the Pālas. This, as a consequence, represents the lowest ebb in the power of the Pālas,[15] the hereditary enemy of the Pratīhāras. From the findspots of the inscriptions it is no exaggeration to say that Mahendrapāla's dominions extended from the Himālayas to the Vindhyas and bordering a strip of territory in the extreme north-west.[16] Thus, under Bhoja and Mahendrapāla Kanauj became the radiating focus of political and cultural activities for well nigh a century.

The first half of the tenth century is marked by the attempts to preserve the Pratīhāra empire intact, despite Rāṣṭrakūṭa invasions that practically had eclipsed the Pratīhāra glory. Leaving aside the claim of Rāṣṭrakūṭa Kṛṣṇa II that he advanced upto the Ganges, there seems no doubt that his successor Indra III campaigned against Pratīhāra Mahipāla sometime between A.D. 915 and 918. According to the Rāṣṭrakūṭa version, Indra III sacked Kanauj and Mahipāla fled for his life. But, as on previous occasions, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas did not stay long enough in the North in order to consolidate their gains in that region. Mahipāla survived this terrible shock, even succeeded in reestablishing the fortunes of his family, by recovering a large part of his earlier dominions. However, the prestige of the Imperial Pratīhāras suffered a severe blow from which they never fully recovered.

By the middle of the tenth century the Pratīhāra empire started to lose its strength. Uncertainty prevailed about the succession to the Imperial throne. The feudatory chiefs and governors eventually started asserting independence and from them new dynasties rose. In a record dated A.D. 954, the Candella Dhaṅga takes the credit for defeating Vināyakapāla, 'the king of Kanauj'.[17] The Cāhamānas of Sākambharī also declared their independence. So also did the

Guhilas of Medapāṭa, and perhaps even some other vassals. While the feudatories started defying the Imperial authority, there also arose new powers like the Kalacuris in Dāhaladeśa, the Paramāras in Mālava and the Caulukyas in Gujarat further undermined the declining power of the Pratīhāras. The final assault came in the form of a devastating invasion from North-West.

After plundering Mathurā, Sultān Mahmūd of Ghazni invaded Kanauj in A.D. 1018.[18] After devastating Kanauj Mahmūd left. The Pratīhāras ruled Kanauj for an year more and Rājyapāla, the last potentate of the dynasty and his successors shifted to Bari where they were till about A.D. 1030.

An inscription of the Cālukya dynasty of Lāṭa, dated A.D. 1050, associates a Rāṣṭrakūṭa dynasty with Kanauj.[19] The first known king of this family was Candra, who had established his supremacy over Kanauj during the period of disorder that followed the invasion of Mahmūd. Rāṣṭrakūṭa Candra was succeeded by his son Vigrahapāla, and the latter by his son Bhuvanapāla who flourished in the third quarter of the eleventh century. Kanauj was invaded by Cōḷa Vīra Rājendra about this time. It was sometime between *c.* A.D. 1086 and 1090 in the reign of Gopāla, son and successor of Bhuvanapāla, that Mahmūd, the son of Sultān Ibrahim of Ghazni, plundered Kanauj.

During this period of uncertainty, one Candradeva belonging to the Gāhaḍavāla family seized the throne of Kanauj from Rāṣṭrakūṭa Gopāla; this was sometime about the closing phase of the eleventh century A.D. By the valour of his arms, records an inscription, Candradeva had acquired matchless sovereignty over the glorious Kāṇyakubja[20] (*Nija-bhuj-opārjita-Kāṇyakub-jādhipatya Śrī Candradevaḥ*) and thus Kanauj came under the control of the Gāhaḍavālas, who had Benaras as their second capital.

Madanacandra, the son and successor of Candradeva, was also in possession of Bithaur sub-division of the Etawah District and part of ancient Pāñcala, in addition to Kanauj and Benaras, as the inscriptions testify. According to the Muslim chroniclers, Masud III invaded the kingdom of Kanauj, and took Malhi (Madanacandra) who had to purchase his release by paying a large sum of money. Govindacandra (A.D. 1114-1154),[21] son of Madanacandra, who was the *de facto* ruler during the life-time of his father, is said to have

defeated the Muslims. He also had repulsed an attack of Rampāla of Gauda. It appears from the *Prākṛta-Paiṅgala* that the king of Kāśī came in conflict with the powers like the Pālas, Senas, Candellas, Gaṅgas, Kākatiyas, Cālukyas and Muslims.[22] The king of Kāśī referred to evidently was Govindacandra. The epigraphs of the Gāhaḍavālas suggest that the kingdom of Govindacandra included Benaras, Fatehpur and Kanpur districts and extended at least upto Kanauj in the west, Gondā and Gorakhpur districts in the east, and Dinapur in the Patna district in Bihar in the south. Govindacandra also extended his sphere of influence over some of the contemporary rulers of the North and South. That Govindacandra maintained relation with the Cōḻas is evident from the Goṅgaikoṇḍa Cōḻapuram inscription of Kulōttunga I.[23] He is known to have sent his ambassador Sohala to the court of king Jayasiṁha (A.D. 1128-1149) of the Lohāra dynasty of Kāśmīra. The mission was no doubt non-political, but it must have materially contributed to cementing relations between Kanauj and Kāśmīra.[24] It is clear from the epigraphic and numismatic evidence that Govindacandra had been a powerful ruler and under him the glories of Kanauj had been revived to a great extent. Govindacandra is known to have been acquainted with various branches of art. He had a number of queens, one of whom was a Buddhist named Kumāradevī. Govindacandra was succeeded by his son Vijayacandra who was in his turn succeeded by Jayaccandra, destined to be the last of the Gāhaḍavālas who finally succumbed to the onslaught of the Turkish invader Muhammad Ghuri. The impact of this invasion was borne by two powerful princes of North India, namely, Jayaccandra Gāhaḍavāla of Kanauj and Cāhamāna Pṛthvīrāj III of Delhi and Ajmer. Each one of them was powerful singly and sufficiently, but owing to their hereditary rivalry the two could not combine against the common enemy. Muhammad Ghuri, the ruler of the small kingdom of Ghur in Afghanistan, defeated Pṛthvīrāj III in the second battle of Tarain in A D. 1192; this feat of Ghuri brought about a turning point in the history of Northern India which brought far-reaching consequences. King Jayaccandra fought Ghuri with all his resources in the vicinity of Cāndawār, but was defeated and killed in the battle in A.D. 1193.[25] The Muslims could not maintain their hold on their newly conquered territory for a some time yet to come. Jayaccandra's son Hariścandra was in possession of Kanauj in A.D. 1197. The Candella Trailokyavarmā is said to have won a victory over a king of Kāṇyakubja, who may be identified as Hariścandra. Adakamalla, who belonged to the Gāhaḍavāla dynasty, seems to have been Hariścandra's successor. Kanauj was

finally conquered by Iltutmisch[26] and the imperial prestige of the city was forever laid to dust.

The Gaṅgā-Yamunā doab, with Kanauj as a pivotal centre of cultural activities, had witnessed several political upheavals for a prolonged period, from about *c.* A.D. 750 to A.D. 1200. The traditions developed in this long period have left significant marks on the total culture of this age.

Popular Amusements, Recreations, Dress and Jewellery

Popular amusements in the region were more or less similar to those of the preceding period. It was the fashion of the high born girls to play with balls (*kaṇḍuka*).[27] Dancing for recreation by ladies and dramatic presentations in honour of deities found mention in the contemporary inscriptions.[28] Rājaśekhara[29] describes ladies dancing, singing and playing musical instruments. Some of them were accomplished painters as well as poetesses too. The ladies of the higher class used to visit the jewelled-roof terraces and picture galleries. Ordinary womenfolk were also a happy class conscious of their material obligations and responsibilities. But they were equally interested in their pleasure and pastime. This is evinced from Rājaśekhara's reference to singing wives and herdsmen. Other amusements described in the literature of the period remind one of the diversions of *nāgaraka* described in Vātsyayaṇa's *Kāmasūtra*. Rājaśekhara gives an interesting account of a poet's daily life. A poet according to him used to arrange poetical assemblies (*kāvyagoṣṭhī*).[30] A high standard of living seems to have been maintained. The number of professions, mentioned by Medhatithi, such as bath-man (*snāpaka*), a toilette man (*prasādhanaka*) and professional cook (*pācaka*), reveal a state of luxurious living.

The literary sources as well as the visual art reveal the widespread use of large variety of garments and ornaments. Rājaśekhara has mentioned quite a variety of garments and ornaments. The dress of the ladies includes a mantle (*dukūta*), a bodice (*colaka*) also called (*kañculikā*), and the skirt (*nīvī*). Silk was in common use. The fashionable ladies were particular in arranging the border of their dress in an attractive manner. As regards men's dress it was invariably the loin-cloth. The poet refers to an over-garment called *ottarīyam*.[31] An elaborate description of a heroine's toilette is also found.[32] Her limbs were anointed with saffron and eyes with collyrium. Her lovely

locks were well arranged, and her hair decorated with flowers. The lexicons[33] give us synonyms for different types of coiffure such as curled hair on the forehead in bee shape, thin hair, bound and unbound hair, braided hair, clean and unentangled hair and so forth. The mark on the forehead (*tilaka*) and similar other decorations were made on the cheeks. Her person was adorned with ear-ring, rows of bracelets, long necklaces, a ruby encrusted girdle and anklets.[34] Rājaśekhara[35] states that the fashions of the ladies of Kāṇyakubja were followed by the fashionable ladies all over the country.

Besides the testimony drawn from indigenous literature, the Arab writers are also found to have marked the love of ornaments as one of the characteristics of the Indians. According to Sulaiman, Indians both male and female decorated themselves with golden bracelets and precious stones. Abu-Zaid states that Indian kings wore necklaces of precious red and green stones mounted on gold, while they held pearls in the greatest esteem.

Economic Background

It is well known that India had developed an advanced system of agriculture, industry and trade during the time of the Gupta rule. In the records of the period of study here, we have sufficient evidence of an advanced stage of agriculture and its technique.[36]

Industry also played an important part in the economic life of the people. One of the oldest industries was textile.[37] The records of the period mention a great variety of garments, made of silk and fibre textures of cotton and of sheep's and goat's wool. Benaras retained its reputation as one of the centres of silk garments, while Mathurā produced finer striped variety of cotton clothes.

Other industries such as working of metals, especially iron, copper and bronze, the art of jewellery, leather work, wood carving and stone carving had achieved a degree of technical skill.[38] The Siyadoni inscription[39] mentions a number of professions connected with the artisan class. These include potters (*kumbhakāra*), braziers (*kaṁsakāra*) and stone cutters (*silakuta*). Rājaśekhara in his *Kāvyamīmāṁsā*[40] refers to carpenters (*vardhaki*). He also notices certain business classes and artisans. These include painters (*citra-lepya-krita*), jewel setters (*māṇikya bandhaka*), jewellers (*svarnakāra*) etc. The art of jewellery appears to have been in a highly developed state.

Lists of jewels are found in various texts, the longest may be noticed in the *Agnipurāṇa*.[41] Stone quarrying including stone polishing was an important industry, which may be traced from the pre-historic culture of Harappa. The proficiency in this industry was well known during the period of our study and is evident from a good number of sculptures available from our region.

Ibn Khordadbah, in the end of the ninth century A.D., mentions that Indian exports consisted of sandal wood, camphor and camphor water, vegetable stuffs, textiles of velvet, cotton etc.[42] Rājaśekhara in his *Kāvyamīmāṁsā* also mentions various articles of trade.

In the plains of North India, rivers appear to be better and safer means of travelling and transporting merchandise than the roads. It would appear from the *Uktivyaktiprakaraṇa* that the river traffic was very common in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, and the boatmen had gained an intimate knowledge of the course of rivers and their depth at different places.[43] In the *Rājataraṅginī*, we find references to river journeys. We have many references to indicate that traders of one part of India moved freely to the other parts with their merchandise. The *Kuvalayamālākathā* refers to merchants of different regions of North and South meeting together. Reference to an agreement arrived at by horse-dealers from different parts of the country is found in the Pehoa inscription[44] dated A.D. 953, which mentions merchants from Karṇāṭaka, Madhyadeśa, Lāṭa and Takka as agreeing to pay levy on their articles of sale. "The overland routes", says Ghosal,[45] "connecting India with Western Asia go back to the centuries before the Christian era, while those linking her with Central Asia and China came into use sometime later. With the gradual advance of the arms of Islam from India's borderlands to her heart in the Gaṅgā Valley, the control of these routes must have passed entirely into the hands of the Muslim rulers."

A well developed and progressive economic life requires an extensive circulation of coins, weights and measures of all denominations. Fortunately archaeological data of the period provide ample materials on this aspect of the economic life.

The guilds and similar corporate associations continued to play a part in the organisation of industry and trade of the time.[46] Medhatithi defines guild or *śreṇī*[47] as consisting of people following common professions, such as tradesmen, artisans, money-lenders and others. He also mentions the law of guild. In the inscriptions of the period,

we come to know not only of different classes of guilds but also of their constitutions and functions. Sometimes they entered into an agreement with the government to the effect that they would pay fixed sums in lieu of usual share of profits. In return, they took advantage in guaranteeing the inviolability of the agreement and assumed complete right of trade on the market. An important part was played by the industrial and commercial guilds in the economic life of the people. The guilds collectively made endowments for pious objects. They served to stimulate spiritual benefactions by pious activities like building temples, water reservoirs etc. Such acts were appreciated, leading as they did to the advantage of the people of the entire community.

Besides the guilds, the other type of mercantile organisation was the *saṁgha*. *Saṁgha* was a community of persons following the same pursuit, though belonging to different castes (*jāti*) and regions (*deśa*). This was illustrated by the examples of *saṁgha* of mendicants (*bhikṣu*) or merchants (*vaṇika*.) The mercantile *saṁgha* was thus unlike the guild an association of traders comprising different castes inhabiting the different regions. From the practical point of view, *saṁgha* was a broader form of *śreṇī*.

The survey provides a broad idea regarding the general economic condition of Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley people during the period. There are sufficient indigenous evidences to show a developed condition of agriculture, industry and trade It would not be unreasonable to infer that a high level of economic prosperity prevailed among the people engaged in these vocations. It is indeed quite natural that this level varied in different parts of the country and also among the different strata of the population. The prosperity of the cities in the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley regions was noticed even by the Muslim writers and chroniclers. Our study refers to the economic condition of the people before the Muslims had begun their depredations on a serious scale. As Ghosal[48] observes, "the accounts of the Muslim chroniclers give vivid descriptions of the wholesale plunder and devastation of the country as well as massacre and enslavement of its inhabitants that attended its conquest by the arms of Islam. These events could not but disrupt completely the economic life of the people who thus came under the foreign yoke."

Religious Background

The basic aspects of the religious thoughts and practices of the

preceding times continued to be present during the period of our study. But the relative importance of the different faiths, namely, Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism underwent change. The Puranic Hinduism, in the form of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, now gradually dominated the field, and they vied with each other for supremacy. Buddhism and Jainism are still followed by isolated groups all over Northern India, but there is ample evidence that they were fast losing ground, save in a few localized pockets.

The notable feature of the religious life was toleration. Image worship dominated the field. These basic facts instituted and guaranteed the continuity of the art traditions of each creed which afford an opportunity to trace the development in an unbroken chain indeed down to the last days of Hindu rule in North India in general and Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley in particular. The spirit of toleration shown by the followers of different religions led to catholicism which overrode narrow sectarian views. Thus members of the royal family are known to have been votaries of different religious creeds. For example, the founder of the Gurjara-Pratīhāra family, Devaśakti, was a Vaiṣṇava, his son Vatsarāja a Śaiva, the latter's son Nāgabhaṭa II was a devotee of Bhāgavatī and Nāgabhaṭa II's son Rāmbhadra was a sun worshipper (*Ādityabhakta*).[49] The period brings into prominent relief the reciprocal influence of different religious sects. Though the Gurjara-Pratīhāras and the Gāhaḍavālas were hereditary Brahmanists, they did not confine their spiritual allegiance to one and the same deity. In the *Bappabhaṭṭi Carita* (*Prabhāvaka Caritra*: A.D. 1277) there is a reference to Nāgabhaṭa's heavy leaning towards Jainism.

The outstanding features during the Pratīhāra as well as the Gāhaḍavāla period were the worship of images and a variety of gods and goddesses. Temples were built in large number and well known as *devagṛhas*[50] or *caityas*.[51] To quote Tripathi,[52] "with their lofty spires, rich ornamental designs and graceful sculptures the construction of these elaborate structures must have entailed great engineering skill and workmanship." In the post-Gupta period, the influence of Vaiṣṇava faith can be traced throughout North India, Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley included. Among the gods Viṣṇu was highly venerated. He is invoked in such names as Yajñavarāha, Garuḍāsanadeva, Mādhava, Narakadviṣa, Trilokyamohana, Murārī to mention only a few. The Gāhaḍavāla copper plates often allude to the god Vāsudeva. A number of inscriptions[53] found in the different parts of Northern India appear to suggest that Vaiṣṇavism was enjoying popularity in

our period. The Pehoa inscription mentions the establishment of the temple of Viṣṇu Garuḍāsana, built by the Brāhmaṇa Bhuvaka in Bhojapura,[54] near Kanauj. The contemporary inscriptions also evince the popularity of worship of Śiva in this period. Different names were given also to this deity,[55] and like the devotees of Viṣṇu, the votaries of Śiva were also interested in creating religious endowments. Among the royal patrons, the Gurjara-Pratīhāra king Vatsarāja and Mahendrapāla II are described as "*Maheśvara*". What is more, Bhoja evinced keen interest in Śaivism. The Gāhaḍavāla kings declared themselves "*Parama-māheśvara*".

A host of other Brahmanical gods and goddesses were also worshipped during our period, as attested by epigraphical and archaeological records. These were Sūrya, Śakti, Bhagavatī (Durgā), Śrī or Lakṣmī, Viṇāyaka, Kumāra-Kārttikeya, Dikpālas, Navagrahas to mention only a few. In religion there had also developed a spirit of tolerance and mutual give and take. A modified monolatry, which maintained the supremacy of the particular deity, at the same time admitting the existence and the right to worship other gods and goddesses, made its appearance.

Hiuen Tsang noticed the desolate and ruined condition of most of the Buddhist sacred places in India during the first half of the seventh century A.D.[56] But with the establishment of the Pālas the Buddhist sects within the Pāla empire again attained popularity. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries an effort seems to have been made to reclaim and renovate most of the Buddhist holy sites. We learn from an inscription dated A.D. 1026 from Sārnāth that Mahipāla I had built and repaired many sacred structures in the holy sites of the Buddhists. Even Kauśāmbī, an old Buddhist site, was restored and rehabilitated during the reign of Mahipāla I. From a record of the 11th year of his reign we learn that Nalanda Mahāvihāra, which had previously been badly damaged by fire, was repaired by a follower of Mahāyāna sect of Buddhism, Bālāditya by name, hailing as he did from Kauśāmbī (*Kauśāmbī vinirgata*).[57] Gāhaḍavāla Govindacandra was not a Buddhist, but his reign is marked by two significant events in the later history of Buddhism.[58] The first was the construction of the stupendous *Dharmacakra-Jinavihāra* (Monastery-I) at Sārnāth by his Buddhist wife Kumāradevī, who had installed therein an image of the goddess Vasudhārā. About the same time was applied the last encasing of the *Dharmarājikā* stūpa, which was earlier repaired in A.D. 1026, at Sārnāth. Sārnāth thus had once again become an active centre

of Buddhism. This is proved not only by inscriptions but also by the find of a variety of Buddhist images from Sārnāth of this period. The other notable incident of Govindacandra's reign, recorded in an inscription found at Sahet-Mahet, was his bestowal of as many as six villages upon the community of the Buddhist friars (*Śākyabhikṣu*). Buddhism thus had gained a strong hold over the family and Govindacandra's grandson Jayaccandra, who was originally a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, subsequently became a disciple of a Buddhist monk Śrīmitra of Bodhgayā. One of the potent factors in the evolution of the religious ideas of this period had been the emergence of Tāntric cult which profoundly influenced Buddhism and transformed it almost beyond recognition. Analogous Tāntric ideas also manifested among different Brahmanical sects causing radical change in their views and practices. The Tāntric practices made extensive use of *mudrās*, *maṇḍalas* and *mantras* for inducing concentration of thought. The growth of Tāntric ideas has been held as the cause of steady decline in Buddhism. But Brahmanical religion had been reinvigorated by the emergence of philosophers like Śaṅkarācārya who instilled new vitality and purpose in the Brahmanical traditions.

Jainism did not gain much royal support in Northern India but this was compensated by the popularity of the religion among the trading community in the North. The Jaina philosophy reached a high level of development and the literary output of the system was likewise remarkable. The interesting feature of Jainism of the period is that it saved itself from the influence of Śaktism.[59] The austere, routine, pious life and the absence of possessive instincts, in the case of the Jaina monks, earned for Jainism considerable admiration and respect of the society. The popular support it enjoyed had been illustrated by the fact that it had among its followers the *Vira Banajigas* and the commercial class, whose financial help went a long way in the promotion of Jainism. This help had enabled the Jainas to construct *Jinālayas* with images. The Pratīhāra ruler Nāgabhaṭa I figures prominently in the Jaina literature. King Āma, son of Yaśovarmā of Gwalior, is said to have built temples dedicated to Tīrthaṅkaras at Kanauj and Mathurā etc. Vatsarāja, son of Nāgabhaṭa II, is said to have been converted to Jainism and the latter's grandson Bhoja was also a great patron of the religion.

Background of the Pre-medieval Art of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley

A new outlook and attitude had become immanent in the art

forms of the Gupta period in Northern India. This remarkable change is reflected not only in the plastic art, but also in other aspects of culture, namely, religion, philosophy, literature and sciences. The rise of the Guptas signified the reappearance of a unified rule over greater part of Northern India. This led to the resurgence of a conscious national ideal. In the field of art, especially in sculpture, the Gupta period witnessed a heightening of the aesthetic consciousness[60] leading to the fulfilment and culmination of earlier trends and tendencies. This was the time when Classical tradition succeeded in expressing itself most profoundly. A long and consistent course of evolution through the preceding centuries had prepared the way for a complete efflorescence of the artistic genius of the people. In the Gupta period developed a unified plastic tradition that was of supreme import in art history. Since the early phase of Classical art, we have seen the human form gaining importance. It has now an exclusive existence, apart from and independent of the world of vegetation, as we find in the art activities of Bhārut, Sāñchi and Mathurā, in the early centuries of the Christian era. In composition it is the human figure that now becomes the centre of attraction, and all other forms are subordinate to it, being used mainly to give it relief and to emphasise its importance. Thus, Coomaraswamy and Kramrisch[61] marked the transubstantiation of rhythm of nature into human figure by the Gupta artist. In fact, the human figure is the keynote of Gupta plastic art. The idealisation of human body in its organic and rhythmic beauty based upon similitudes drawn from Nature and its sublimation and grace constituted the Gupta Classical ideal of Indian sculpture. The Gupta period ushered in an intellectual consciousness which permeates all forms of creative activity. A new orientation in the attitude towards art is noticed in the attempt to establish relation between the outer form and inner spirit. This leads to the new aesthetic experiences which transcend the world of senses and tries to record higher understandings and deeper realisations. The art forms as developed through previous phases had been brought under discipline in the Gupta period both mentally and physically. It has been rightly suggested by an art historian that "the intellectual disciplines were at the root of the evolution of the various attitudes (*āsana*) and gestures (*mudrās*) for the proper renderings of the different actions and moods to be attributed to the figures."[62] In respect of form and volume, Mathurā and Sārnāth workshops presented their best in the Gupta period. In the organic and integrated relations of volume, in the rhythmic arrangements of contours, Gupta sculptures achieved a 'plastic refinement as well

as spiritual experience'. A softened plasticity and sublime spiritual experience were the distinguishing features of the Sārnāth sculptures in particular, and Gupta art in general. The refinement and delicacy in sculptural art of the Gupta period were felt in varying degrees, at different centres. The achievements in the different regions appear, however, to be swayed by certain factors, due possibly to local conditions and environment. "The formulae of Indian texts are now definitely crystallised and universally accepted", so says Coomaraswamy,[63] "iconographic types and compositions variable in the Kuṣāṇa period are now standardised in forms, whose influence extended far beyond the Ganges Valley and of which the influence was felt, not only throughout India and Ceylon but far beyond the confines of India proper, surviving to the present day."

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An almost similar description of *Antarvedī* appears also in the *Bālarāmāyaṇa* of Rājaśekhara. The name which probably literally meant a sacred ground, in its territorial application might have indicated the sanctity in which the land designated by it was held in the historic periods.
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31. Puri, B.N., *Op. Cit.*, p. 123.
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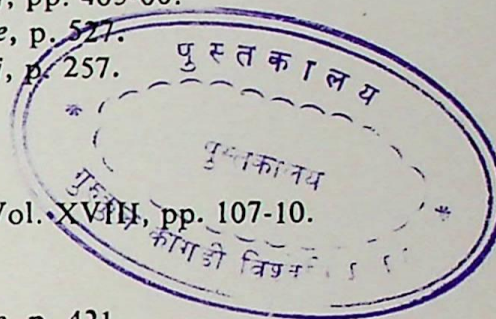

EVOLUTION OF THE GAṄGĀ-YAMUNĀ VALLEY STYLE
c. A.D. 750-1200

Dated and Dateable Gupta and Medieval Sculpture of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley

The regional schools of medieval[1] Indian sculpture including that of Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley are known to have their ultimate moorings in the traditions evolved during the Gupta period. Dated Gupta sculptures provide a clear picture of the evolutionary direction noted in the Gupta plastic style, and therefore they may be considered at the outset in order to understand the background to our study. The dated and dateable sculptures are listed below:

(1) A seated Bodhisattva from Bodhgayā (Indian Museum), in the year 64 of one Maharaja Trikamala[2] (A.D. 383/84) (Fig. 1).
(2) A seated Jina from Mathurā (Lucknow Museum), year 113[3] (A.D. 432/33) (Fig. 2).
(3) A seated Buddha from Mankuwār (Lucknow Museum), year 129[4] (A.D. 448/49) (Fig. 3).
(4) A standing Buddha from Sārnāth (Sārnāth Museum), year 154[5] (A.D. 473/74) (Fig. 4).
(5) Two images of standing Buddha from Sārnāth (Sārnāth Museum), both dated in the year 157[6] (A.D. 476/77) (Figs. 5, 6).
(6) A standing Buddha from Mathurā (Mathurā Museum), year 230[7] (A.D. 549/50) (Fig. 7).

A reference to the Sārnāth sculpture showing Buddha in *dharmacakrapravartana-mudrā*,[8] though not bearing any date, deserves to be called for, since it has been rightly considered to be the finest expression of Gupta Classical concept in all its bearings (Fig. 8). The sculpture may be ascribed to the fifth century, possibly to the latter half.

The examination of the dated and dateable Gupta sculptures

from the last quarter of the fourth to the middle of the sixth century A.D. clearly brings out the following facts having a bearing on the evolutionary sequence. The simple and low pedestal (Fig. 1) gradually gains height (Fig. 2) and assumes the shape of a complete stool (Fig. 3). In each of these sculptures, the god sits directly on the pedestal, whereas in the Sārnāth *dharmacakrapravartana* Buddha (Fig. 8) a cushion over the pedestal serves as the seat of the Master. The pedestals of the three Sārnāth Buddha images (Figs. 4-6) and the Mathurā sculpture (Fig. 7) are low and plain. An interesting development in the stela formation may be noticed in the two Sārnāth sculptures (Figs. 5, 6), where the Master is seen to be standing on a full-blown lotus in each case, but not directly on the pedestal as noticed in other sculptures (Figs. 4-7). In the Sārnāth image (Fig. 4), the Buddha is provided with a rectangular stela supporting a circular decorated nimbus (parts of which still remain around the head). The complete form of this arrangement may be seen in the Sārnāth *dharmacakrapravartana* image (Fig. 8) and the standing Buddha from Mathurā (Fig. 7). In both the images from Sārnāth (Figs. 5, 6), these two components, namely, stela and nimbus are seen to be merged in one continuous stela with a rounded top presenting attenuated figures in the lower section and the flying *vidyādharas* in the upper. Again in the Sārnāth image showing *dharmacakrapravartana mudrā* the stela has been conceived as a throne-back with *vyālas* supporting the lintel with *makara* ends, which is surmounted by a highly ornate nimbus with a flying *vidyādhara* on either side. In short, in respect of the composition of the stela the evolutionary direction is from plainness to elaboration, from simplicity to a richer and complete treatment.

The physiognomy of the Bodhgayā Bodhisattva shows a sturdy massiveness with pronounced Mathurā features[9] of earlier period. The tradition has been more or less maintained in the Mathurā Jina (Fig. 2), as well as in the Mankuwār Buddha (Fig. 3), each in robust form, distinguished by broad shoulders and chest. At the same time they seem to have accepted the changed representational concept of the Gupta age, though they are far from accepting the Gupta plastic norms noticeable in the Sārnāth Buddha images (Figs. 4-6). Rendered in slim and slender form, with a view to achieving refinement in plastic content as well as to introduce a certain relaxation in attitude, the Sārnāth Buddhas were remarkable. The treatment of physiognomy in its slimness and suppleness leading to an almost unearthly refinement of form may be noticed at its best in the Sārnāth *dharmacakrapravartana* Buddha (Fig. 8). The Mathurā

Buddha (Fig. 7) undoubtedly represents the Gupta norms but it retains the robustness and ponderosity of the Mathurā tradition.

As for the treatment of drapery, the volumes of the folds of the upper garment are noticeable in the Bodhgayā Bodhisattva, the diaphanous lower garment reaching down to the ankles. In the Sārnāth Buddha images (Figs. 4-6), the drapery is totally diaphanous in texture and clings to the body with only the fringes appearing at the sides and at the lower end near the ankles. In the Mathurā image (Fig. 7), the drapery clings to the body no doubt, but is marked by curved ridges with folds, a traditional stylistic feature of Mathurā.

The dated and dateable sculptures of the Gupta Classical phase thus provide us with a clear direction in tracing the stylistic sequence, and as noted above, this direction appears to be from stolidity to slimness, from massiveness to refinement and from simplicity to elaboration. Now we would examine the dated Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley sculptures, which are unfortunately very scarce, to see how the Gupta norms worked in them.

(1) The Jaina *Caturmukha* from Mathurā (Lucknow Museum), *saṁvat* 1080[10] (A.D. 1023) (Fig. 9).
(2) Pedestal of an image of a seated Buddha from Sārnāth (Sārnāth Museum), *saṁvat* 1083[11] (A.D. 1026) (Fig. 10).
(3) A seated Jina from Mathurā (Mathurā Museum), *saṁvat* 1104[12] (A.D. 1047) (Fig. 11).
(4) A seated Jina from Mathurā (Lucknow Museum), *saṁvat* 1134[13] (A.D. 1077) (Fig. 12).
(5) A standing Viṣṇu from Meharauli (National Museum), *saṁvat* 1024[14] (A.D. 1147) (Fig. 13).

The dated sculptures are thus seen to belong to the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Besides these sculptures, a few inscribed images found in this region may be of some value as they also indicate approximate dates on paleographical considerations.

(1) The image of Lokanātha and Siddhaikavīra from Pakhna, Farrukhabad, U.P., now in the Lucknow Museum[15] (Fig. 14), may be ascribed to the ninth century on paleographical considerations.
(2) The image of Jambhala and Vasudhārā from Sārnāth,

now in the Sārnāth Museum,[16] may be dated in the twelfth century on the same considerations (Fig. 15).

The dated and dateable sculptures in the above lists are thus found to belong to the ninth and eleventh-twelfth centuries A.D. The absence of dated and dateable records of the eighth century leaves us in a vacuum in regard to the definite examples of the initial and formative phase of the medieval sculptural activity in the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley. We have no dated sculpture, again, that may be ascribed to the tenth century. The absence of dated records causes difficulty in tracing the history of medieval plastic style of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley from the strict evolutionary point of view. We may, however, proceed to examine the stylistic elements of these dated and dateable examples to ascertain common characteristics of medieval Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley sculptures, which may help us in overcoming the lacuna caused by the absence of dated examples of the eighth and the tenth century A.D.

The *Caturmukha* dated A.D. 1023 from Mathurā (Fig. 9) shows a Tīrthaṅkara seated on the pedestal on each of its four sides. The *āsana* is interestingly designed. It is of one plane and fashioned as an elaborate royal seat with two rounded pillars at the ends, the space between the pillars being filled by a wheel with a crouching lion on either side. In addition, a stylised cover (*ajināsana*) is seen hanging from the seat. The stela forming the backrests of the Tīrthaṅkaras is plain and simple. The lions on the face of the pedestal are conventionally treated. The Tīrthaṅkaras are delineated in a meditative pose (*dhyānāsana*). In its form, features and proportions, the Mathurā image follows the exterior norms of the Classical Gupta sculptures. As Tīrthaṅkara images are found to be highly conventionalised, it is difficult in general to deduce any stylistic evolution from them. Nevertheless, in the four Jina figures of the *Caturmukha*, the delineation of the waistlines is sharper and the breasts are prominently shown. These are of course minor stylistic points, which further evolved in the later days. The pleats of the *ajināsana* are also worth noticing.

The fragmentary sculpture from Sārnāth of A.D. 1026 (Fig. 10) retains only the lower part of a Buddha image seated on a pedestal. The pedestal is of one plane, which shows seven counter sunk panels divided by pillarettes. The wheel and a pair of deer, occupying the middle niche, indicate Buddha's first sermon. The two erect thunder-

bolts (*vajra*) are shown on both sides of the wheel. The ends of the throne are supported by fat dwarfish atlantid figures. The sitting posture of the Master is that of *vajraparyaṅka* and the semi-diaphanous lower garment reaches upto the ankles and its folds gather on the top of the pedestal showing a separate volume.

The Tīrthaṅkara figure from Mathurā dated A.D. 1047 is unfortunately damaged at the face (Fig. 11). The figure is shown seated in meditative pose on a raised lion-throne with a *triratha* pedestal. The throne is supported by a pair of crouching lions, a decorated *ajināsana* showing greater elaboration than what we see in image of A.D. 1023 hanging between them. The lions on the face of the pedestal are also conventionally treated, as in A.D. 1023 image (Fig. 9). The stela which provides a halo behind the Tīrthaṅkara is a rectangular slab with a pointed apex. On the stela, on each side, one finds a *cāmara*-bearer, a *gandharva* and an elephant, arranged in an ascending order on his two sides. At the top, above the halo, is the parasol (*chatrāvali*). The plastic volume of the figure reminds one of the physical treatment of the Gupta sculpture in its Mathurā version But its fleshiness is earthy, empty of Gupta transcendence. The treatment of the body shows a sharper cut of the waistline, while the lower abdomen is somewhat fleshy.

The next dated image is also of a Jina from Mathurā, carved in the year A.D. 1077 (Fig. 12). The Jina is shown seated on a highly decorated cushion. The sculpture is carved in the round. So far as the physique of the Tīrthaṅkara is concerned, it has become slim; but there is hardly any refinement of the contour. The cut of the waistline is sharper and there is a bulge at the lower abdomen below the navel. The prominent breasts are marked with nipples. The sharpness of chiselling may be marked in the raised eye-brows, incised necklines, the nipples, the *śrivatsa* mark and also in the individual treatment of the fingers and toes. The decorative designs on the face of the cushion are also minutely delineated. The hair arrangement of the Jina Tīrthaṅkara showing the curled coiffure with a protuberance in the centre is generally found to be conventional, and this is also evident in the dated medieval images examined earlier.

The Meharauli Viṣṇu dated in the year A.D. 1147 (Fig. 13) deserves special consideration for at least two reasons. First, it is a complete piece among the dated examples belonging to our period and is in an excellent state of preservation. Second, it would provide the

norm and standard of the typical medieval sculpture of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley belonging to the closing period. In this sculpture, Viṣṇu stands on a pedestal in *samapadasthānaka* pose against a richly decorated background. The entire composition may be divided into three sections, namely, (i) the central section with the image proper, (ii) the pilasters on the sides of the image and (iii) the *parikara* or *toraṇa* supported by pilasters. These appear to be separate pieces and assembled together to complete the elaborate composition. In the centre the god stands on a *saptaratha* pedestal, accompanied by the attendant figures three on either side. Above the attendant figures there are two figures with folded hands, one on each side of the deity. Next on two sides of Viṣṇu's head, are the seated figures of Brahmā and Śiva, two other members of the Hindu triad. The double rimmed star-shaped nimbus is shown behind the head of the principal image. On the pedestal the *bhadra* has the inscription on either side of which appears the seated figure of a devotee. The next section, comprising the two richly decorated pilasters, facetted in design, is made to support the heavy decorated arch over the image. The pilasters are found to be divided into vertical niches which contain relief panels with crowded compositions showing various aspects of Viṣṇu. The third section, which forms the upper part of the composition, is in the shape of an arch (*toraṇa*). It contains the representations of various incarnations of Viṣṇu in two rows of semicircular panels. On the two ends of the upper part of the stela, bracket figures showing a female emerging out of the mouth of a *makara* further emphasise on the decorative element of the stela. Moreover, architecturally conceived *śikharas* bearing *āmalakas* are shown at the top as well as on the two sides of the stela.

The Meharauli Viṣṇu displays physiognomical features which are obviously distinct from those of the Gupta type. One misses in it the subtle, refined and sensitive treatment of the body usually noticed in the Gupta sculptures or even in the dated sculptures of this period examined above. The suave and facile linear treatment is replaced by sharp and angular contours. At the same time there is a thinning down of the plastic content leading to a weakening and desiccation of the physical form. Despite clear chiselling and trim execution of details, the body exhumed merely a mechanical grace and a laboured workmanship. The weight of the body is supported by legs resembling trunks of trees. The face is oval, with broad and open eyes, a sharp nose and a distinctly delineated chin. The lips and cheeks of the deity are extremely sensitive. The accompanying figures appeared

to be insipid and ossified. The upper part of the principal figure is bare except for the strings of necklaces on his breast. He wears a *dhoti* as his lower garment, reaching to the knees, with pleats in the front. The accompanying female figures have scarf-like apparel on the torso and the waist downwards is draped by a *sāri*. The head of Viṣṇu is covered by an elaborate crown (*kiriṭamukuṭa*) and therefore very little idea can be formed of the hairdo. He is richly bedecked with jewels, and the ornaments include ear-rings, collar necklace, pearl strings, bracelets, armlets, wristlets, waistband and anklets. He also wears the usual sacred thread and the long garland.

The Meharauli Viṣṇu reveals certain significant changes from the Classical Gupta tradition, both in respect of the stela formation as well as the physiognomical features. From this dated sculpture one may discern how far the medieval sculptures drifted away from the Gupta norms. In it there is an emphasis on details, and this is reflected not only in the composition of the stela, but also in the increased number of ornaments. In spite of their minute and detailed delineation they seldom help in relieving the mechanical appearance of the form.

The two inscribed and paleographically dateable sculptures may be examined next. As earlier referred to, one of them representing Lokanāthaa nd Siddhaikavīra is from Farrukhabad (Fig. 13), ascribable to the ninth century and the other is the Jambhala-Vasudhārā couple from Sārnāth (Fig. 14), ascribable to the twelfth century.

In the physical representation the figure of Lokanātha and Siddhaikavīra may be marked for robustness and vitality with an emphasis on the triple-bend which seems to have been accentuated by the upper tilt of their hips. The plastic pliability and the linear rhythm noticed in the figures seem to connect them with the Gupta tradition. The composition is plain and simple; the carving is bold in general with a feeling for decorativeness as may be noticed in the treatment of the lotus bases, the haloes, the selective ornaments and the lotus held by Siddhaikavīra. All these elements smack of Gupta trends and tend to place the piece in a period not later than the ninth century. The treatment of the eye-brows in separate plastic volume is stylistically indicative of the date.

The Jambhala-Vasudhārā figures (Fig. 14) are carved free of their background and are flanked by a pilaster on each side marking

the stela which appears to have lost its formal role in this particular scheme. The stela shows a cut out behind the figures proper, which is known to be the practice and style of the eleventh-twelfth century sculpture of Northern India. The images stand on a *pañcaratha* pedestal bearing a pair of vases (*ratnaghaṭa*) on its face. Two kneeling figures, one each on either side of the principal figures, represent donors or devotees and a figure carrying a garland is shown on the upper section of the stela. The plastic treatment of the couple, though somewhat fleshy and sensitive, shows a clear tendency toward petrification. In his facial expression the wild disposition of Jambhala is clearly revealed. His bulgy abdomen and squat body along with his *pratyālīḍha* stance are indicative of his fearful appearance. The upper part of the Vasudhārā's body is covered by a *coli*, while her lower garment fastened much below the navel reaches upto the ankles. A long scarf flows from her arms and hangs over her legs as if like a garland. The border of her lower garment is stylistically treated and its ends are shown in front of her right thigh in a separate swing. Her counterpart, Jambhala, wears no garment. The Vasudhārā is richly bedecked with ornaments such as double necklace, chains (*hāra*), armlets, girdle (*mekhalā*) and anklets (*ūnpura*). Most of her jewellery are of a beaded design and they show separate plastic treatment.

Among the five dated medieval sculptures from the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley examined above, three are of Jaina affiliation, one of the remaining two shows only the lower part of a *vajrāsana* Buddha image, while the other is that of a Viṣṇu. Again, all the three Jina images and the severely damaged Buddha image (Fig. 10) belong to the eleventh century, and therefore are not of much help in indicating the stylistic sequence of medieval sculpture through the centuries. Moreover, it is also difficult to study stylistic nuances from the Jina images which always follow the rigid iconic injunctions. Nevertheless, it is possible to show that there occurred a clear stylistic change sometime in the middle of the eleventh century A.D. A comparison of the dated Jaina *Caturmukha* (Fig. 9) from Mathurā and the figure of Tīrthaṅkara (Fig. 11) from the same place, both belonging to the first half of the eleventh century along with the Tīrthaṅkara of A.D. 1077 (Fig. 12), would clearly indicate the points of plastic departure of the latter from the former. While much of the plastic volume and pliability associated with the Gupta tradition are found to work in the *Caturmukha* and the Tīrthaṅkara images from Mathurā (Figs. 9, 11), a marked tendency of shedding off the masses from the figure and the sharpening of various limbs may be noticed in the

Mathurā Tīrthaṅkara example (Fig. 12). The earlier relaxation seems to have been replaced by a stiffened rigour. The feeling for details and their minute chiselling are the other characteristics of the later sculptures. This stiffening of the figures and feeling for minute details may be found further emphasised in the next century when the Meharauli Viṣṇu (Fig. 13) was carved. The Meharauli Viṣṇu of A.D. 1147 is, however, extremely valuable, since this sculpture represents almost all the characteristics of the medieval Gaṅga-Yamunā Valley sculpture in its fully developed and mature form. The central figure is delineated with an intention of iconic import but the sculptor was unable to stave off the petrification inertia characteristic of the age. The facial features and the ornaments are minutely worked out. The elaborate stela background and the profusion of decorative figures on the *parikara* creates a visual impression that is distinct from the simple and vitally throbbing background of the Gupta and post-Gupta images. The exercise made by the sculptor to show every possible detail of the deity's ornaments, that is, the stela background singularly contributes to the over-ornateness of the composition.

Though representing a couple belonging to the Buddhist pantheon, the Sārnāth composition depicting Jambhala-Vasudhārā (Fig. 15) ascribable to the twelfth century A.D. shows many of the stylistic features of the Meharauli Viṣṇu composition. But, as if in contrast, the stela representing the Lokanātha and Siddhaikavīra (Fig. 14) dateable in the ninth century is nearer to the Gupta style.

With this background knowledge developed out of the detailed study of the dated and dateable medieval sculptures of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley, we may proceed to examine sculptural pieces obtained from the different parts of the region with the view of placing them in a system of stylistic sequence. We will time and again refer to our experiences gained from the dated and dateable sculptures mentioned above. The gap of some four centuries between Gupta sculpture and the earliest dated medieval of our region will have to be filled up by sculptures showing stylistic closeness or distance from the Classical Gupta norm at one end and medieval on the other. For our purpose we may take into account the dated sculptures of Eastern India for comparison and by so doing the help we receive can enlarge our understanding of the stylistic sequence of the Gaṅga-Yamunā Valley sculpture. In the consideration of the style the features which will be specifically compared (and contrasted) for determining the position of an individual sculpture are: composition

of the stela and decorative elements; physiognomical features; treatment of drapery; and personal ornaments and hair style. In the analysis and study attempted in these pages, it will then be essential to draw upon information provided by the undated sculptures that are otherwise dateable by reference to the style of the dated material.

Pre-Medieval and Medieval Sculptures

Although the study here begins with the middle of the eighth century, we may take into consideration a number of seventh century sculptures, coming from the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley, to bridge the gap in the evolutionary sequence of style between the high Gupta Classical sculptures, represented by the dated images discussed above, and the sculptural examples belonging to the eighth century A.D.

The bust of a female figure from Sārnāth[17] (Fig. 16) with drooping shoulders and globular breasts appears to have been a part of a slender body. The oval and slightly pointed at the lower end face, with almost meditative eyes is expressive of serenity and inner calm. The damaged nose, in all probability, was also gently pointed. The lips, small and closed, express a quiet restraint. The hair is pulled back and tied in a large elegant bun and the locks are horizontally arranged one above the other. The pearl diadem is set in front of the head and the chignon is bound by a circular fillet. A chain ornament borders the headdress. She wears two necklaces, one of which falls between the breasts that are fully developed and treated in a typical Gupta plastic mode.

The female head from Benaras[18] (Fig. 17) is almost similar in style. From its idealised and graceful face it may have belonged to a deity. Her face is beaming with a sweet smile. She is gazing down, the eye-brows are ridged unlike the preceding example. The nose seems originally to have been sharp. The lips are thick and full, the chin pointed. The hair treatment is similar to that of the Sārnāth female bust.

These two sculptures are of the same stylistic group. They are, no doubt, examples of post-Gupta sculpture of Eastern Indian version. This will be clear on comparing them with the Nāginī figures in the niches of the circular Maṇiārmath temple at Rājagṛha.[19]

A figure representing Śiva *pratīhāra* from Ghazipur,[20] Uttar Pradesh (Fig. 18), stands within a niche in a graceful *ābhaṅga* pose.

1. Bodhisattva Trikamala, Bodhgayā, dated AD 383/84, Indian Museum, Calcutta.

2. Tīrthaṅkara, Mathurā, dated AD 432/33, Lucknow Museum.

3. Buddha, Mankuwār, dated AD 448/49, Lucknow Museum.

4. Buddha, Sārnāth, dated AD 473/74, Sārnāth Museum.

5. Buddha, Sārnāth, dated AD 476/77, Sārnāth Museum.

6. Buddha, Sārnāth, dated AD 476/77, Sārnāth Museum.

7. Buddha, Mathurā, dated AD 549/50, Mathurā Museum.

8. Buddha, Sārnāth, 5th century, Sārnāth Museum.

9. Jaina Caturmukha, Mathurā, dated AD 1023, Lucknow Museum.

10. Pedestal of a Buddha image, Sārnāth, dated AD 1026, Sārnāth Museum.

11. Tīrthaṅkara Neminātha, Mathurā, dated AD 1047, Mathurā Museum.

12. Tīrthaṅkara Śitalanātha, Mathurā, dated AD 1077, Lucknow Museum.

13. Viṣṇu, Meharauli, dated AD 1147, National Museum.

14. Lokanātha and Siddhaikavīra, Pakhna, Farrukhabad, *c.* 9th century, Lucknow Museum.

15. Jambhala-Vasudhārā, Sārnāth, *c.* 12th century, Sārnāth Museum.

16. Bust of a goddess, Sārnāth, *c.* 7th century, Indian Museum, Calcutta.

18. Śivapratīhāra, Ghazipur, *c.* 7th century, Lucknow Museum.

17. Head of a goddess, Benaras, *c.* 7th century, Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, Benaras.

19. Bodhisattva, Sārnāth, *c.* 7th century, National Museum, New Delhi.

20. Sūrya, Bhitāri, Ghazipur, *c.* 8th century, Lucknow Museum.

21. Sūrya, Karchana, Allahabad, *c.* 8th century, Allahabad Museum.

22. Garuḍa, Mathurā, *c.* 8th century, National Museum, New Delhi.

23. Jaina Tutelary Couple, Lachagir, Allahabad, *c.* 8th century, Allahabad Museum.

24. Ganapati, Ramnāthpur, Allahabad, *c.* 8th century, Allahabad Museum.

25. Tīrthaṅkara Candraprabha, Kauśāmbī, Allahabad, *c*. 9th century, Allahabad Museum.

26. Mañjuśrī Siddhaikavīra, Sārnāth, *c.* 9th century.

27. Bodhisattva, Sarnath, *c.* 9th century, Sārnāth Museum.

28. Tārā, Sarnath, *c.* 9th century, Sārnāth Museum.

29. Pārvatī-pariṇaya, Kanauj, *c.* 9th century.

30. Mukhaliṅgam, Kanauj, *c*. 9th century.

31. Buddha, Farrukhabad, *c*. 10th century, Lucknow Museum.

32. Tīrthaṅkara Ṛṣabhanātha, Mathurā, *c.* 10th century, Mathurā Museum.

33. Mahāmāyūrī, Uttar Pradesh, *c.* 10th century, British Museum, London.

34. Umā-Maheśvara, Lachagir, Allahabad, *c.* 10th century, Allahabad Museum.

36. Detail of Viṣṇu Trivikrama.

35. Viṣṇu Trivikrama, Moradabad, Kāśipur, *c.* 10th century, National Museum, New Delhi.

37. Viṣṇu Viśvarūpa, Kanauj, *c.* 10th century.

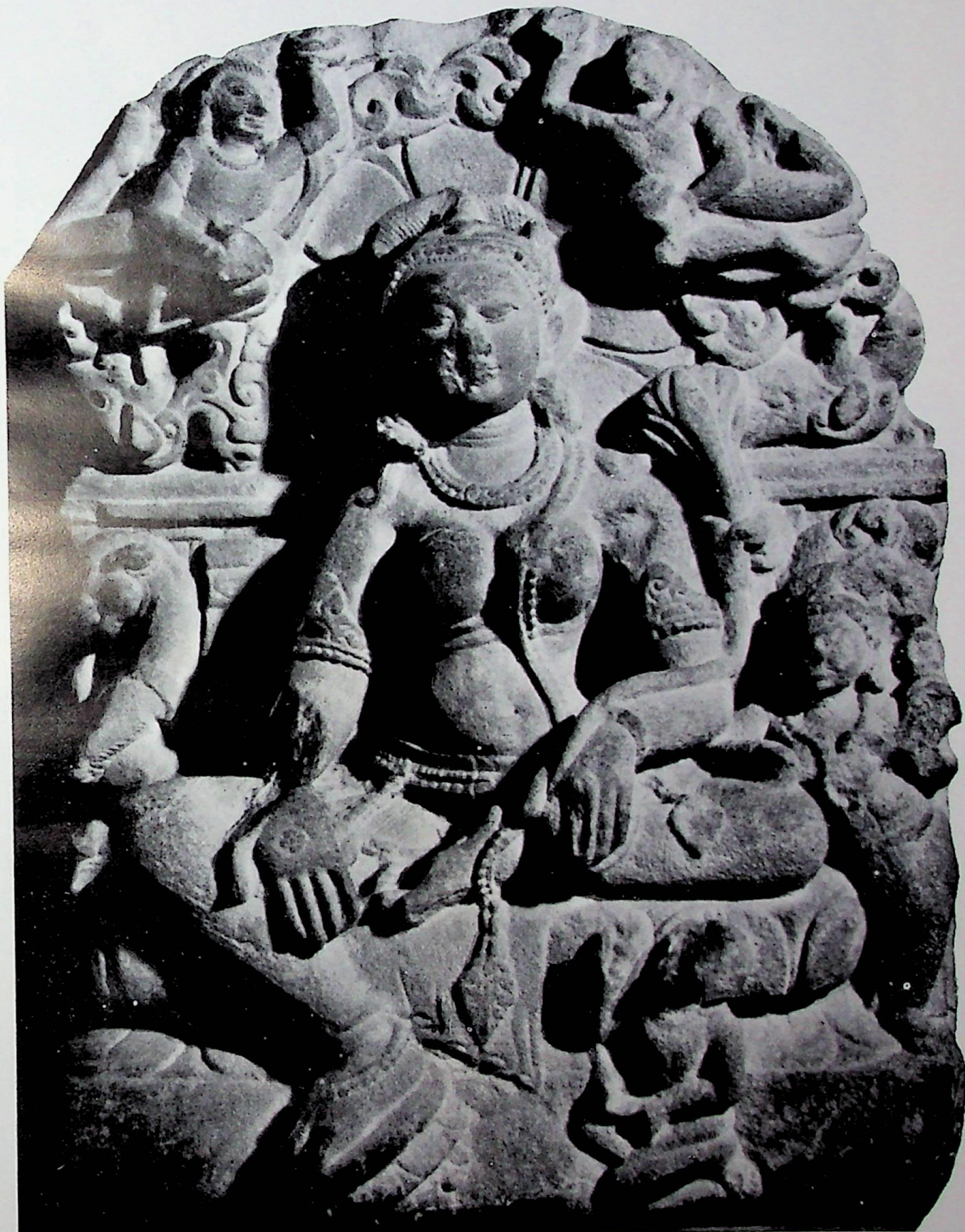
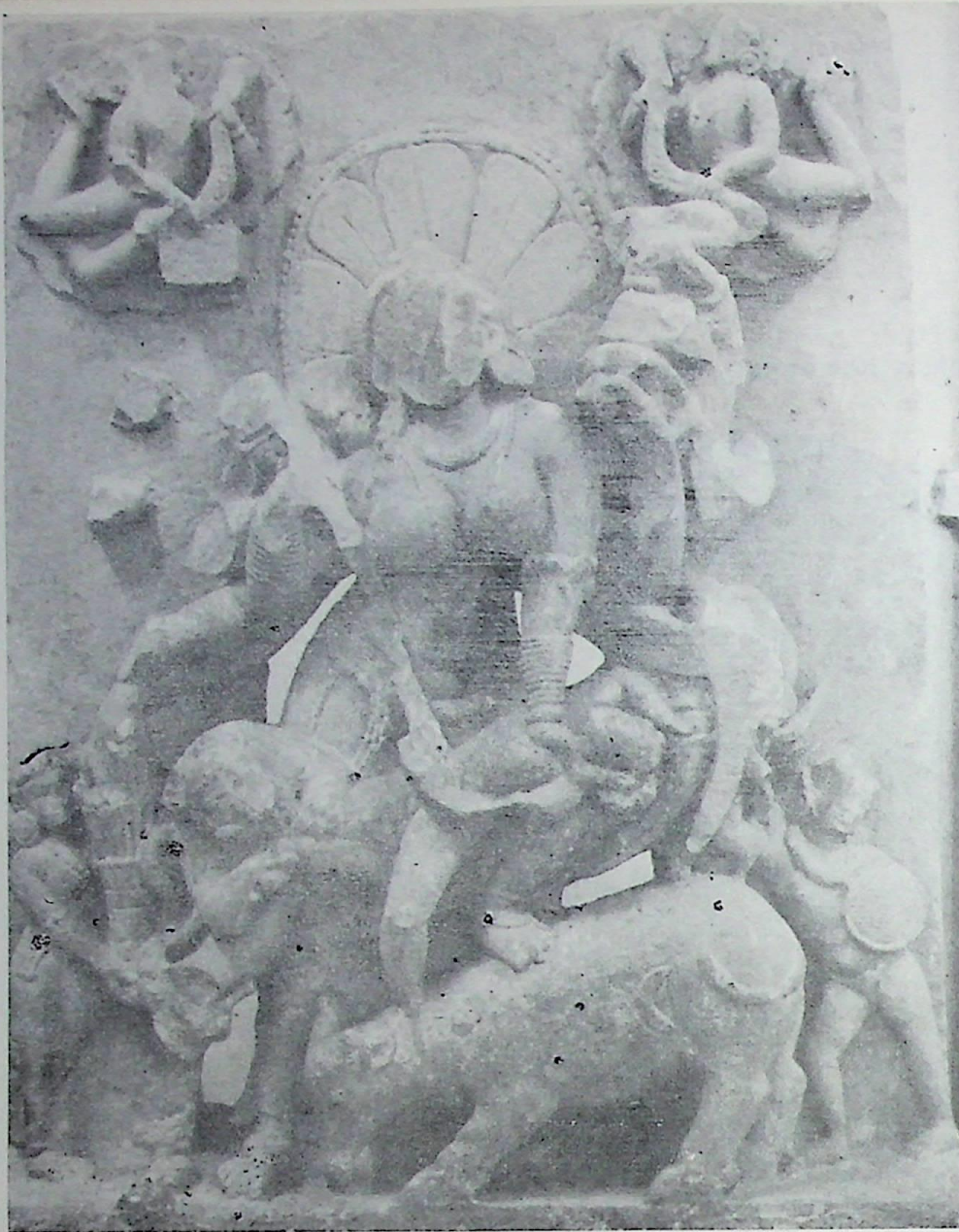
38. Gaṇapati, Farrukhabad, *c.* 10th century, Lucknow Museum.

39. Head of Avalokiteśvara, Sārnāth, *c.* 10th century.

40. Vajrasattva, Sārnāth,
c. 10th century, Sārnāth Museum.

42. Tārā, Sārnāth, *c.* 10th century,
Sārnāth Museum.

41. Vasudhārā, Sārnāth, *c.* 10th century,
Sārnāth Museum.

43. Tārā, Sārnāth, *c.* 10th century, National Museum, New Delhi.

44. Mahiṣamardinī, Benaras, *c.* 10th century, Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, Benaras.

45. Mahiṣamardinī, Etah *c.* 10th century, Lucknow Museum.

46. Sūrya, Asarpur, *c.* 10th century, Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, Benaras.

48. Śiva-Pārvatī, Bhārwāri, *c.* 10th century, Allahabad Museum.

47. Cakreśvarī, Parkhna, Mathurā, *c.* 10th century, Mathurā Museum.

44. Mahiṣamardinī, Benaras, *c.* 10th century, Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, Benaras.

45. Mahiṣamardinī, Etah *c.* 10th century, Lucknow Museum.

47. Cakreśvarī, Parkhna, Mathurā, *c.* 10th century, Mathurā Museum.

46. Sūrya, Asarpur, *c.* 10th century, Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, Benaras.

48. Śiva-Pārvatī, Bhārwāri, *c.* 10th century, Allahabad Museum.

44. Mahiṣamardinī, Benaras, *c.* 10th century, Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, Benaras.

45. Mahiṣamardinī, Etah *c.* 10th century, Lucknow Museum.

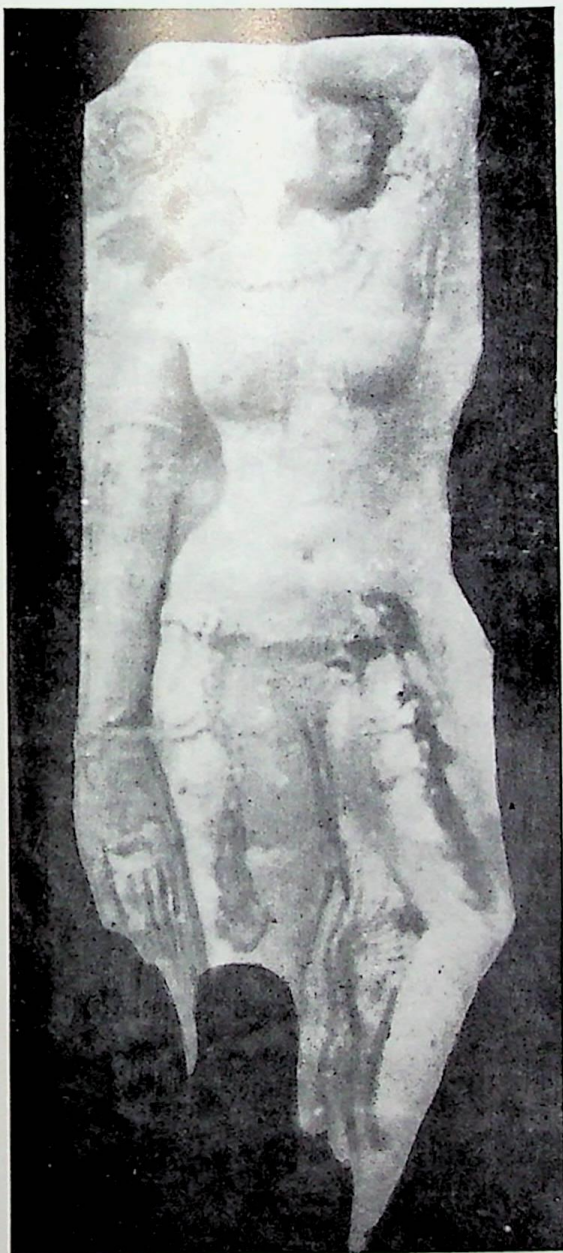
46. Sūrya, Asarpur, *c.* 10th century, Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, Benaras.

48. Śiva-Pārvatī, Bhārwāri, *c.* 10th century, Allahabad Museum.

47. Cakreśvarī, Parkhna, Mathurā, *c.* 10th century, Mathurā Museum.

49. Śiva, Bhiṭā, Allahabad,
c. 10th century, Allahabad Museum.

50. Śiva, Gārhwā, Allahabad,
c. 10th century, Allahabad Museum.

52. Skanda-abhiṣeka, Kanauj, *c.* 10th century, National Museum, New Delhi.

51. Rukmiṇī, Nokhas, *c.* 10th century.

53. Vaiṣṇavī, Bena'as. *c.* 10th century, Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, Benaras.

54. Pārvatī-pariṇaya, Mānikpur, Pratāpgarh, *c*. 10th century, Allahabad Museum.

55. Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, Mānikpur, Pratāpgarh, 10th century, Allahabad Museum.

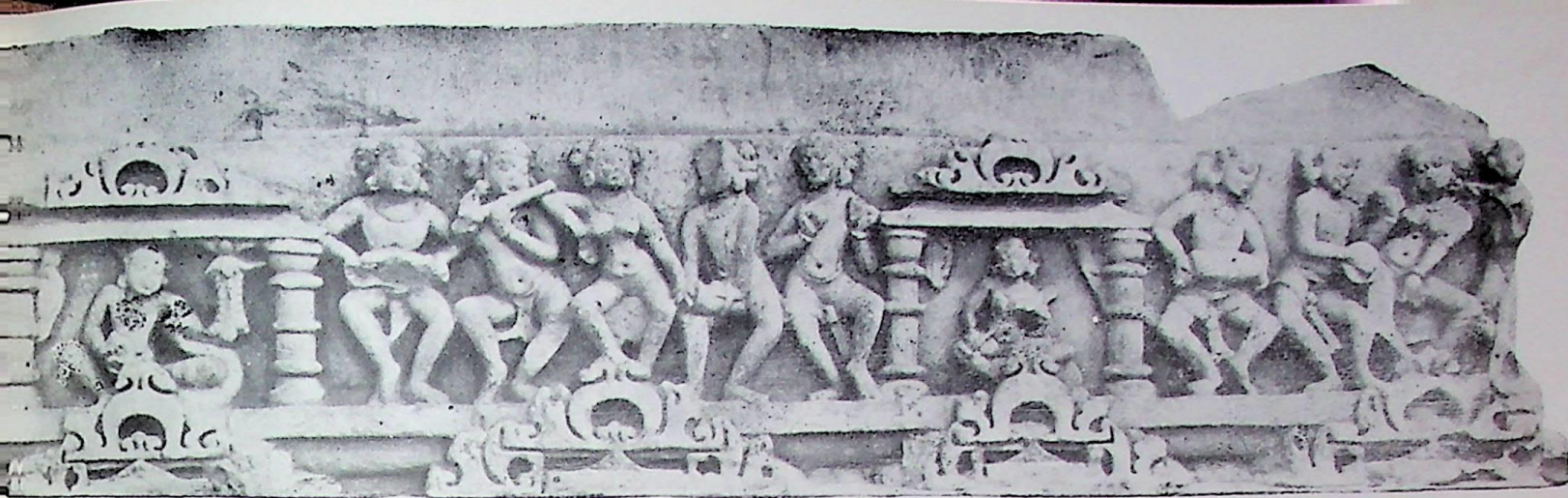
56. Surasundarī, Jāmsot, Allahabad, *c*. 10th century, Allahabad Museum.

58. Flying *gandharva*, Jāmsot, Allahabad, *c*. 10th century, Allahabad Museum.

57. Surasundarī, Jāmsot, Allahabad, *c.* 10th century, Allahabad Museum.

59. Flying *gandharva*, Jāmsot, Allahabad, *c.* 10th century, Allahabad Museum.

60. Surasundarī, Jāmsot, Allahabad, *c.* 10th century, Allahabad Museum.

61. *Gandharva* Couple, Jāmsot, Allahabad, *c*. 10th century, Allahabad Museum.

2!6. Scene of dance and music, Sorāon, Allahabad, *c.* 10th century, Allahabad Museum.

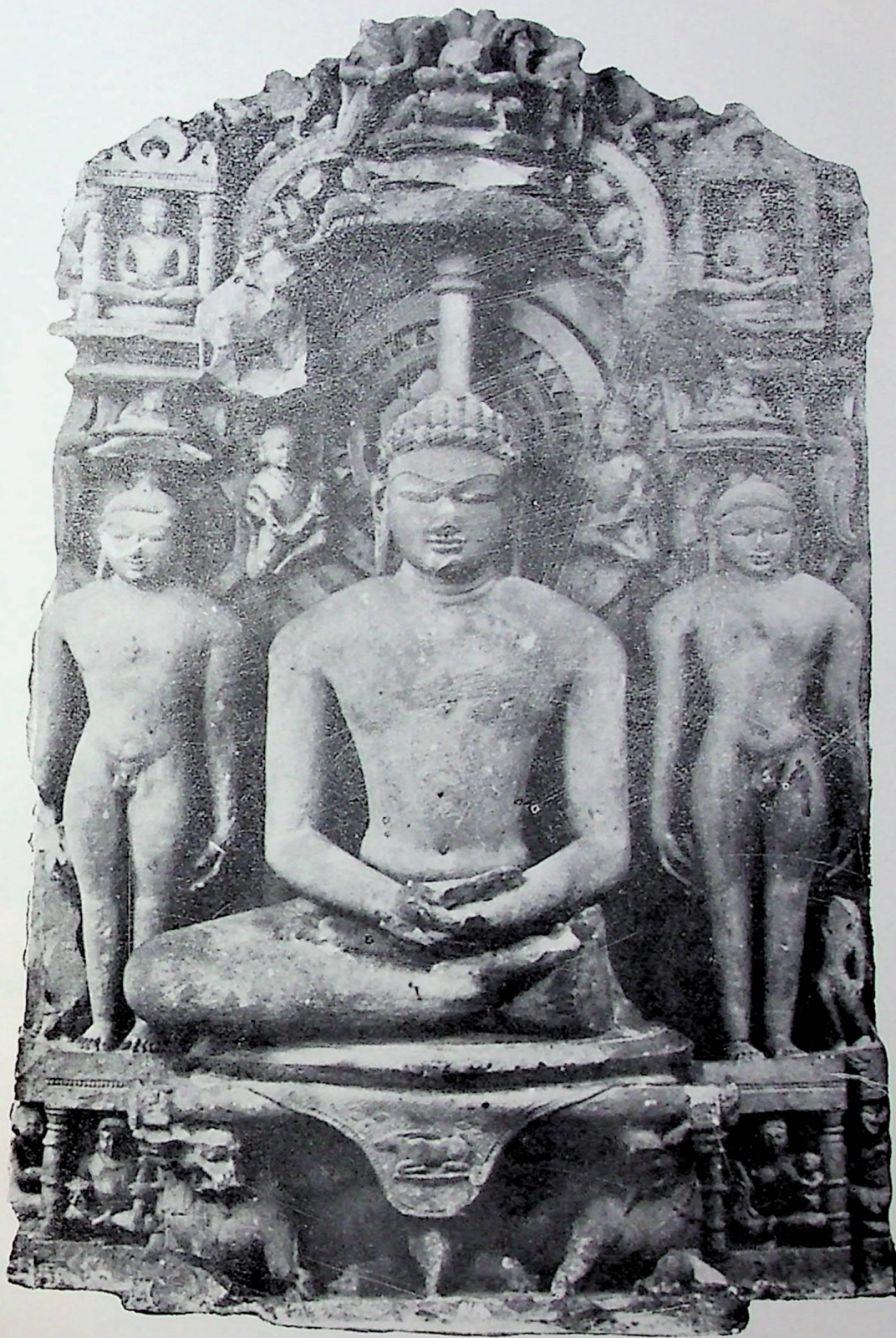
64. Viṣṇu Trivikrama, Bāghārā, Allahabad, *c.* 10th century, Allahabad Museum.

63. Panel showing figure sculptures, Bārā, Allahabad, *c.* 10th century, Allahabad Museum.

← 65. Tīrthaṅkara Neminātha, Mathurā, *c.* 11th century, Mathurā Museum.

→ 66. Tīrthaṅkara Śāntinātha, Kauśāmbī, *c.* 11th century, Allahabad Museum.

67. Tīrthaṅkara Pārśvanātha, Mathurā, *c.* 11th century, Mathurā Museum.

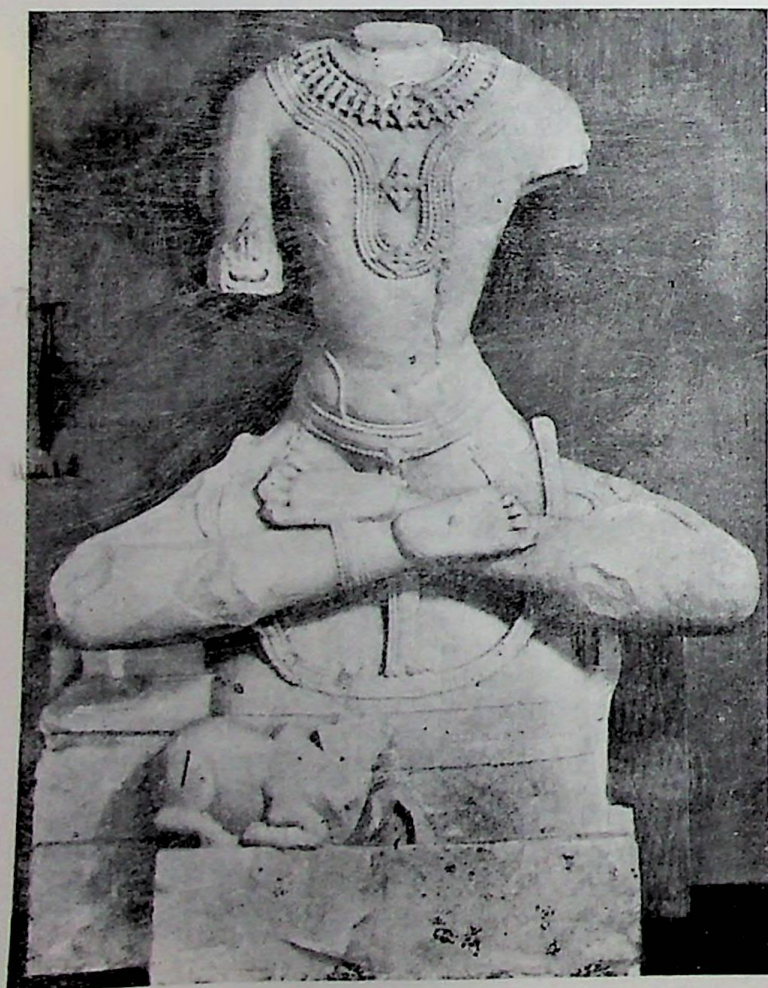
68. Jaina Caturmukha, Etah, *c.* 11th century, Lucknow Museum.

69. Tīrthaṅkara Śāntinātha, Pābhosa, Allahabad, *c.* 11th century, Allahabad Museum.

71. Kṣemaṅkarī, Allahabad, c. 11th century, Allahabad Museum.

70. Sūrya, Kārā, Allahabad, c. 11th century, Allahabad Museum.

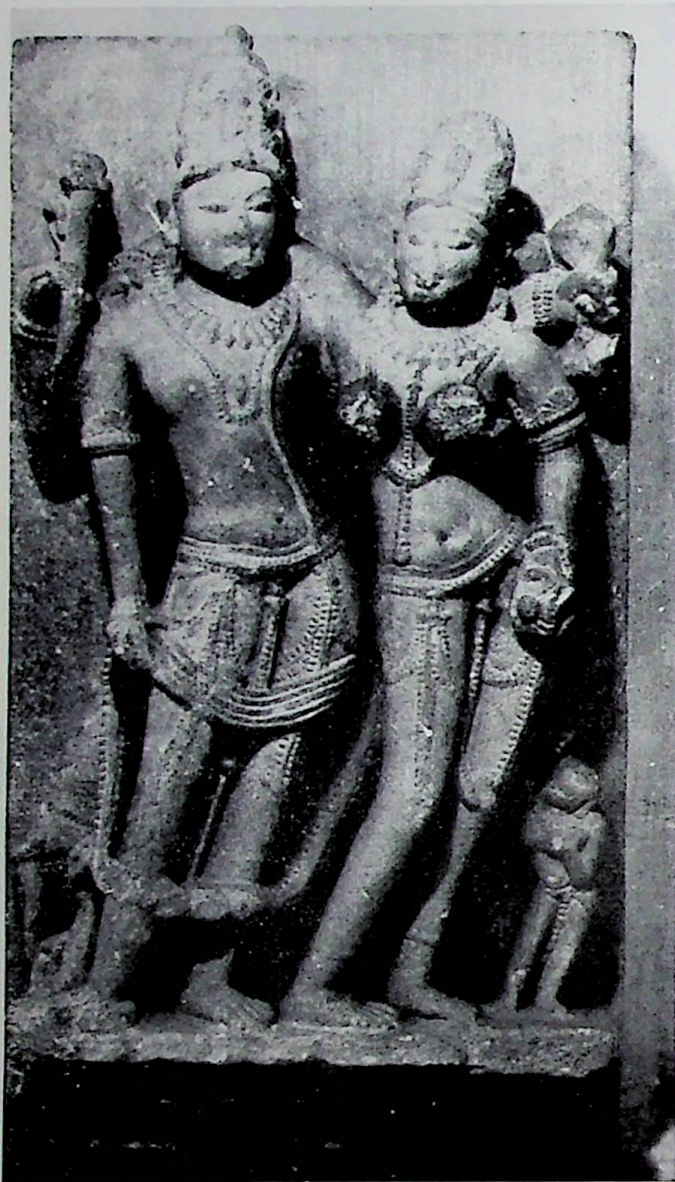
72. Sūrya, Karchana, Allahabad, *c.* 11th century, Allahabad Museum.

73. Devī, Benaras, *c.* 11th century,
Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, Benaras.

74. Mahiṣamardinī, Benaras, *c.* 11th century,
Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, Benaras.

75. Śiva, Gārhwā, Allahabad, *c.* 11th century,
Allahabad Museum.

76. Śiva, Sārnāth, *c.* 11th century, Sārnāth Museum.

77. Bodhisattva Maitreya, Sārnāth, *c.* 11th century, National Museum, New Delhi.

78. Trimūrti, Sārnāth, *c.* 11th century, Sārnāth Museum.

79. Indra and Indrāṇī, Benaras, *c.* 11th century, Lucknow Museum.

80. Śiva Tripurāntaka, Sārnāth, *c.* 11th century, Sārnāth Museum.

81. Viṣṇu-Varāha, Allahabad, *c.* 11th century, Allahabad Museum.

82. Śiva, Jāmsot, Allahabad, *c.* 11th century, Allahabad Museum.

83. Brahmāṇī, Jāmsot, Allahabad, *c.* 11th century, Allahabad Museum.

84. Kārttikeya, Jāmsot, Allahabad, *c.* 11th century, Allahabad Museum.

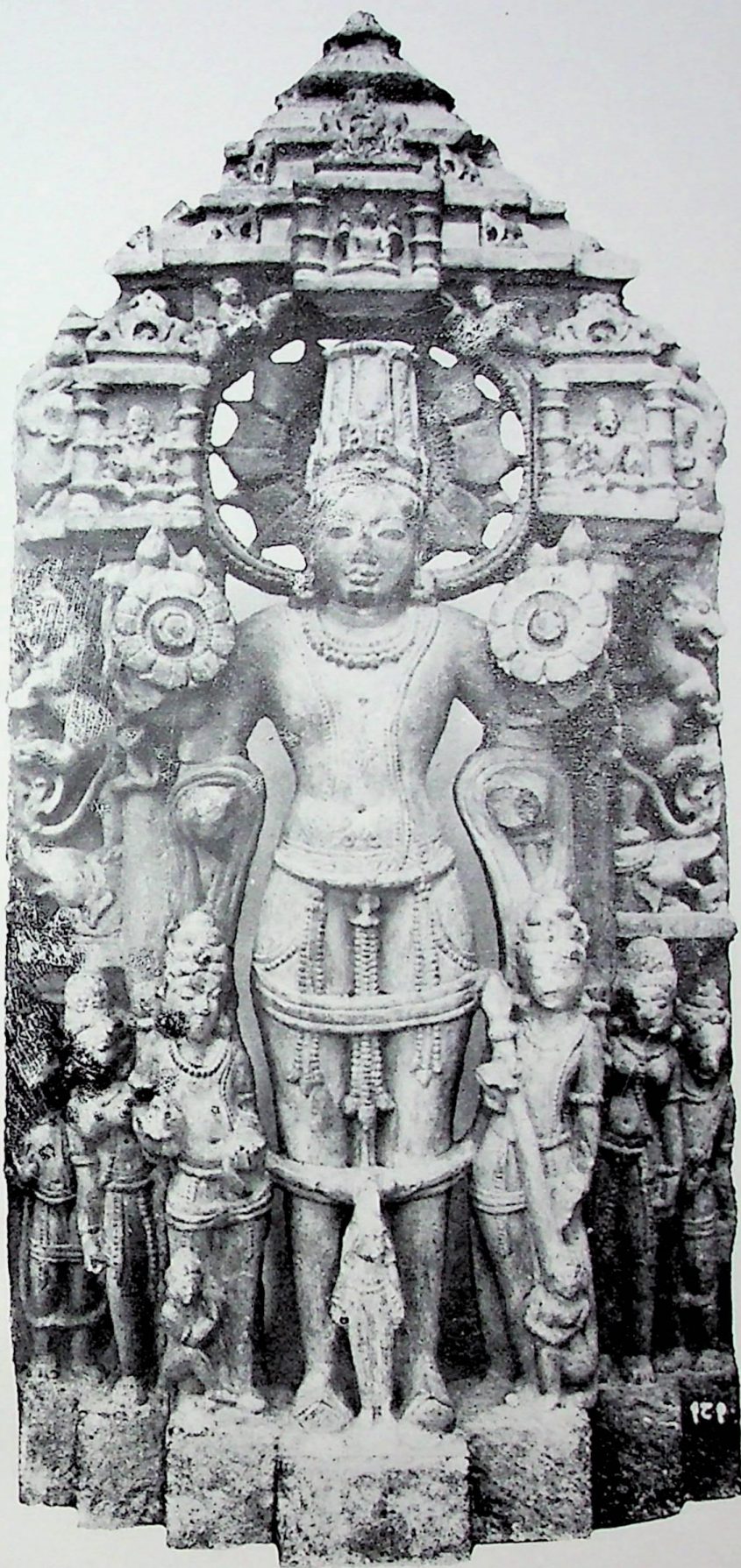
85. Tārā, Sārnāth, *c.* 11th century, National Museum, New Delhi.

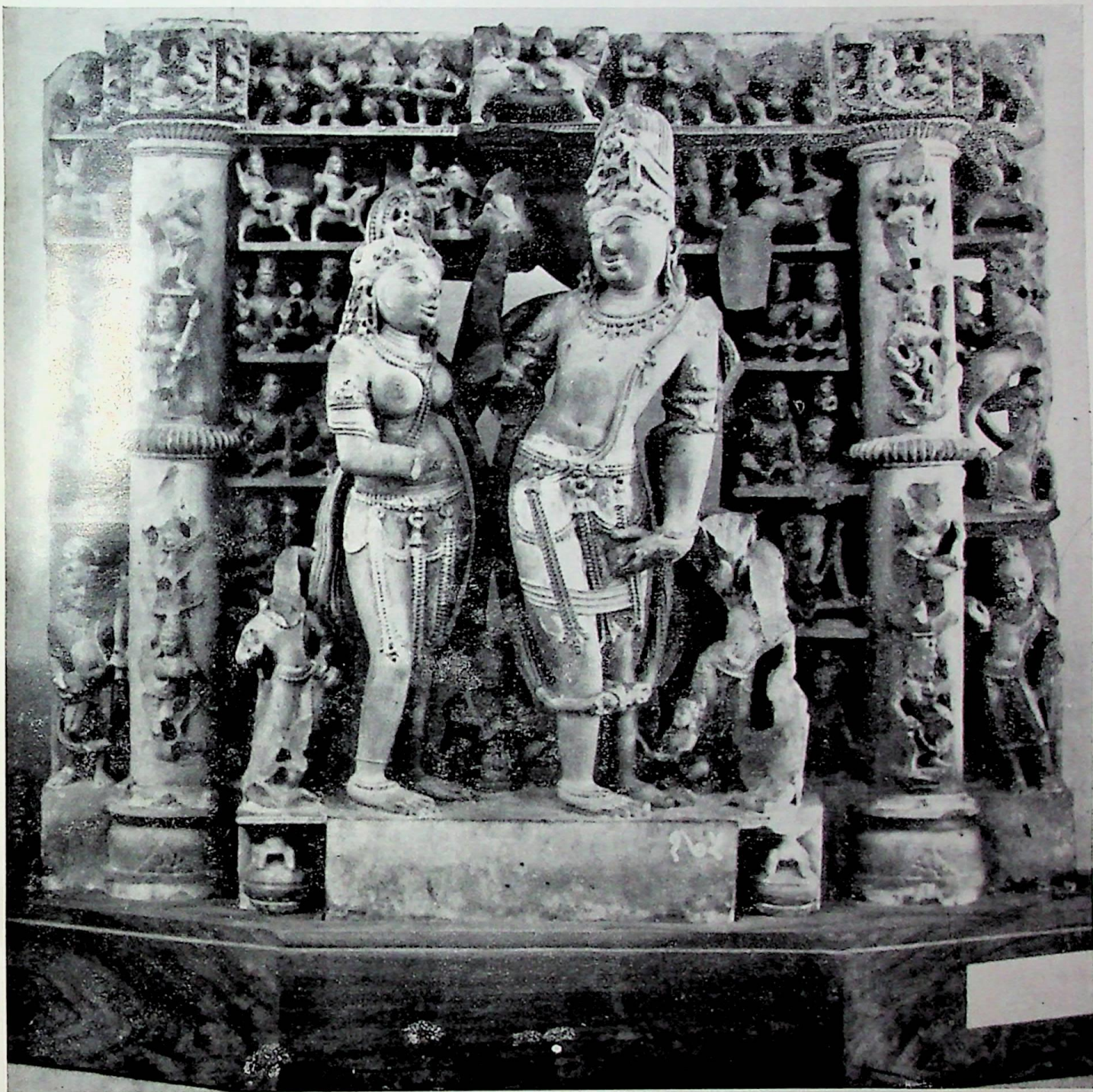
86. Vajra-Tārā, Sārnāth, *c.* 12th century, National Museum, New Delhi.

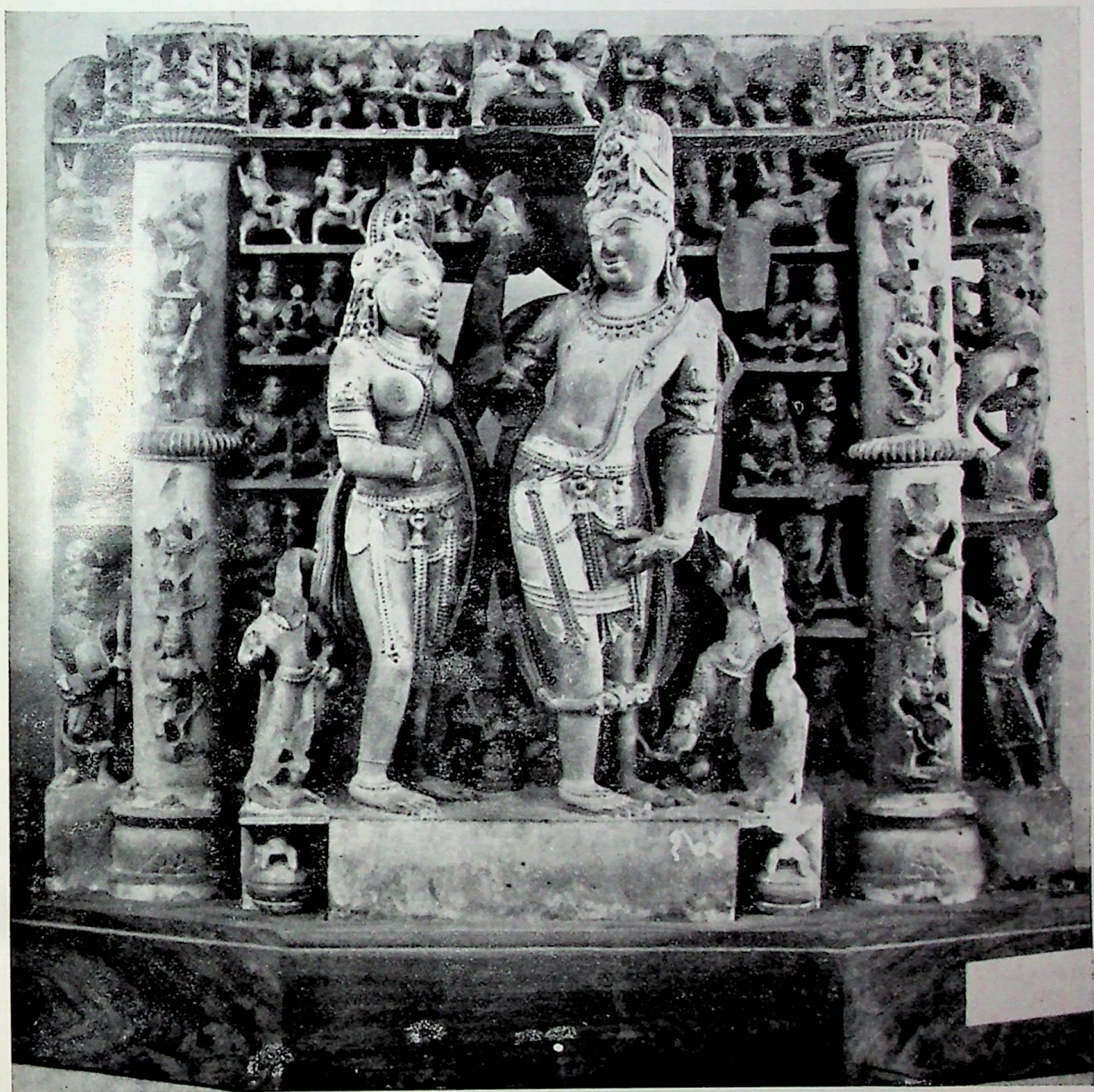
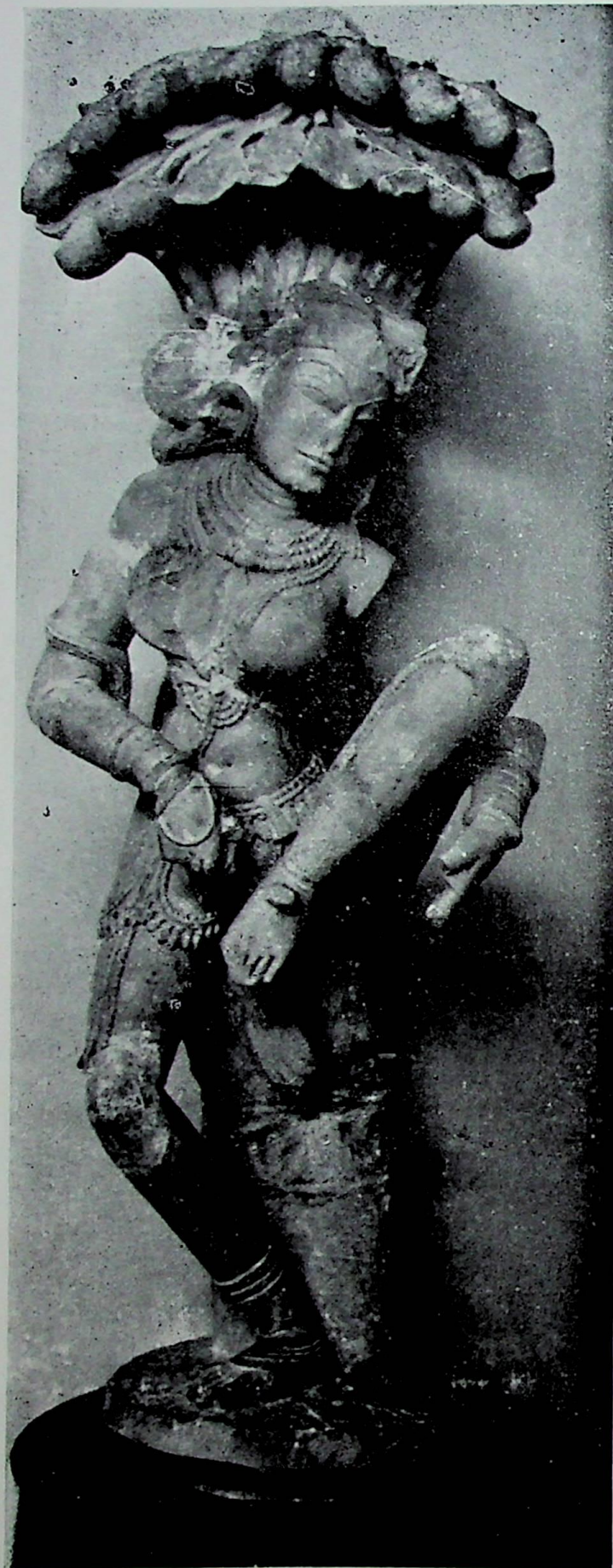
88. Male torso, Mathurā, *c.* 12th century, Lucknow Museum.

87. Tārā, Sārnāth, *c.* 12th century, Sārnāth Museum.

89. Head of Viṣṇu-Viśvarūpa, Uttar Pradesh, *c.* 12th century, National Museum, New Delhi.

90. Siṁhanāda Lokeśvara, Sārnāth, *c.* 12th century, National Museum, New Delhi.

91. Sūrya, Gosainpur, *c*. 12th century, Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, Benaras.

92. Devī, Baijnāth, *c.* 12th century, National Museum, New Delhi.

93. Pārvatī-pariṇaya, Etah, *c.* 12th century, Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, Benaras.

92. Devī, Baijnāth, *c.* 12th century, National Museum, New Delhi.

93. Pārvatī-pariṇaya, Etah, *c.* 12th century, Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, Benaras.

96. Nāyikā, Jāmsot, Allahabad, *c.* 12th century, Allahabad Museum.

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It holds a trident, placed diagonally from the ground. The figure is well proportioned and slim. The face is oval with long eyes, sharp nose, curved lips and pointed chin with a suspicion of a sweet smile. The upper part of the body remains bare, while the garment reaches to the knee. The stylised and folded *uttarīya* passes across the right thigh. The figure's personal ornaments include long ear-rings, wristlets and a beaded necklace. His hair have been set in the form of an *alakā* or wig. The facial expression of the door-guard (*pratīhāra*) is remarkable. Its plasticity reminds one of the Gupta tradition.

In an image of Bodhisattva from Sārnāth[21] (Fig. 19) the deity is shown standing in *ābhaṅga* pose against a plain stela. The stela is a single piece and carried upto the top where it serves as a frame to the entire composition. Such types of the stelas are also known from Gupta Buddhistic and Jaina figures also (Figs. 5-6). The upper part of the stela is damaged, so also the feet and the pedestal. The physiognomical features of the Bodhisattva are elegant and graceful. The torso is broad in the upper section and gradually attenuated in the lower. The arms and limbs are lithe and pliant. The ovular face is full. The eye-brows are deeply cut and the eyes are half closed. The nose seems to be pointed and the sensitive lips are well formed and firm. The facial treatment maintains the Gupta Classical plastic characteristics. The neck has distinct parallel curves, a legacy of the Gupta style. The folded ends of the diaphanous drapery separately hang down from both sides of the Bodhisattva. The ornaments are simple and scarce. The long hair is suggested by separate vertical incised lines. For stylistic evolution the Bodhisattva is of immense significance. The Bodhisattva seems to wake up in this period after the deep 'yogic' trance of the Gupta divine forms. The proximity of the Bodhisattva with the Gupta Classicism may further be demonstrated by the similarity of *jaṭā* noticeable in the Ekamukhaliṅga from Khoh.[22] In a sense, the Sārnāth Bodhisattva is an extension of the Classical Buddhas of the same place and appears to be spiritually very close to the famous standing Buddha from Sultangung.[23] The Sārnāth Bodhisattva and the Ghazipur Śiva *Pratīhāra* (Fig. 18) forms still belong to the Gupta Classical idiom and possibly anticipate the psychological change-over that took place in the awakening of a new spiritual and aesthetic vision in the next few centuries.

Eighth Century

A study of the medieval sculpture in Indian context begins

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Eighth Century

A study of the medieval sculpture in Indian context begins

with the eighth century A.D. The sculptures which have come down from the period and have been obtained from the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley are, however, very scarce. Moreover, none of the figures supposed to be of that age bears an inscription. We consequently have to depend solely on stylistic considerations in placing those to that century. It is now almost an accepted fact that the lustrous times of the Gupta sculpture extended at least upto the end of the seventh century A.D., events of significant historical consequence in North India caused an abrupt end of the aesthetic ideals and stylistic norms set forth under the Guptas. It is further known that during the reign of the Pāla rulers, Dharmapāla (*c.* A.D. 770-810) and his son Devapāla (*c.* A.D. 810-850), an attempt had been made by Dhimān and his son Bitpālo in Eastern India[24] to revive the glorious tradition of the Gupta art. This break appears to have been noticed in a number of sculptural pieces found in the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley as well as in Eastern India, and assignable to the eighth century A.D. One of them is definitely the Bodhgayā lintel carved in the twenty-sixth year of Dharmapāla,[25] which represents three niches containing images of Sūrya, Śiva Lākulīśa and Viṣṇu. The static and stunted forms of these gods bear no relation to the Gupta pliability and refinement. They are apparently untouched by the aesthetic and stylistic norms for which the Gupta sculptures are so highly praised. The same may also be said of the two Sūrya images, one from Bhiṭāri, Ghazipur[26] (Fig. 20) and the other from Karchana,[27] Allahabad Dist. (Fig. 21). Though somewhat enlivened and plastically sensitive in comparison with the representations of the sculptures met with on Bodhgayā lintel, they also show some characteristics which differ from the Gupta plastic norms.

In the Sūrya image from Bhiṭāri (Fig. 20), the sun god is shown standing along with two miniature attendants on a raised pedestal. The plain rectangular stela is semicircular at the top, while an oval-shaped lotus nimbus is carved on it. The deity having his known iconogram wears tastefully decorated ornaments. The treatment of the body is quite sensitive. To meet its iconographical requirements the figure is shown statically standing in a strict frontal pose. But the two attending figures with their triple bend are a study in contrast introducing as they do a rhythm in the composition. The stylised face shows ridged eye-brows and curved eye-lids. The lips are full and sensitive. But in spite of a feeling for volume it lacks the plasticity of the Gupta tradition. Though somewhat simpler in composition, the Karchana Sūrya (Fig. 21) evokes the same judgement.

The Garuḍa from Mathurā[28] (Fig. 22) now in the National Museum is shown seated with his right knee raised against a plain background. The figure is short and squat and throughout maintains heaviness of volume. The face is almost round, the eyes wide and open, and the face expresses a light grin. The accentuated curves of the eye-lids and brows compare favourably with the broad high nose and the full lips. The entire body seems soft and fleshy. Figure's ornaments are plain and summarized. The headgear has a crest of snakehoods. The upper part of the body is bare, while the lower garment is tied up below the navel indicating a separate volume.

The parents of Jina from Lachagir, Allahabad[29] (Fig. 23) is a piece stylistically very close to the Mathurā Garuḍa (Fig. 22). The couple is seated frontally under a tree. A tiny Jina figure in meditative pose sits above the tree and five miniature figures of adorers are shown on the pedestal. The carving of the stela is bold, once more reminiscent of the Gupta tradition, but it lacks the refinement associated with the latter.

A pronounced concern for plastic qualities and rhythmic arrangement of limbs may be noted in an image of Gaṇapati from Ramnāthpur, Allahabad[30] (Fig. 24). Except the upper part the sculpture is badly damaged. The image is placed against a plain rectangular stela, showing the trace of a simple circular nimbus. The potbellied god is modelled in round with broad shoulders, rounded arms and a fleshy chest. The serpentine shape of the trunk, small eyes and broad wing-like ears are typical of this elephant-headed god. The pliability of the body may be noticed in the bulging belly tied up by a waistband and in the swing of the trunk. Against the ponderous presence of the god, the miniature attending figures offer a pleasing contrast. Characteristics of the Gupta tradition retained in the curled tiered wig-type coiffure of the *gaṇa* figure and the armlets of Gaṇapati. The treatment of the coiffure may be compared with the Deogarh relief figures of the Gupta period.[31] The modelling of the principal figure, though massive, does not tend to be inflated or turgid. Restraint is perceptible in the delineation of the decorative details, specially noticeable in the make-up of the stela and the treatment of the nimbus. Though the Gaṇapati exhibits plastic volume reminiscent of the Gupta days, the treatment of his rounded headband, the sacred thread and some other ornaments helps one to place the sculpture in the eighth century.

Ninth Century

In the ninth century sculptures of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley the stylistic trends anticipated in the preceding century are fully crystallised. These tendencies became more and more prominent and further developed as the basic features of the medieval style. We may begin with the image of Jina Candraprabha, found from Kauśāmbī[32] (Fig. 25). The figure is presented on a *triratha* pedestal, the stela behind carried upto the top. The principal figure is shown seated on a lotus throne with a plain tapering back. On either side of the figure occurs the sensitively rendered figure of a *caurī*-bearer. These figures wear short lower garments and the plain oval halo at their back. The head of the Jina and his two attendants are badly damaged. Behind the head of the Jina also is shown a beautifully carved circular nimbus. Its central disk is plain, surrounded by a corolla, a row of lotus petals, and a foliated scroll with a beaded edge. Above this aureole is a three-tiered parasol, on either side of which occurs a flying *vidyādhara* carved against the cloud.

This Kauśāmbī sculpture presents a simple stela with limited decorative details. The physiognomical characteristics of the Jina figure show strong but slender body with elongated arms and somewhat long legs. The flesh seems smooth and soft, and this is particularly apparent at the lower region of the abdomen and navel. The slight bulge noticed below the navel and the sharp incision of the waistlines are indicative of new trends that are not found in similarly constructed Gupta images. Furthermore, we here notice an emphasis on linearism which is also a point of departure from typical Gupta sculpture. Otherwise, the treatment of its attendant figures and the nimbus behind the head connect the sculpture with the Gupta traditions.

We may next take up the figure of Bodhisattva Siddhaikavīra from Sārnāth[33] (Fig. 26). The figure stands in *ābhaṅga* pose on a double whorled lotus pedestal. The plain and simple stela is carried upto the top. The damaged right hand was perhaps in the pose of bestowing boon (*varada mudrā*), while the left holds a lotus. The firmly modelled figure is shaped with broad shoulders and rounded arms and legs. The upper part of the body is bare, the lower is clad in a diaphanous garment. Besides the broad necklace, armlets and wristlets, there is a metallic looking waistband. The accompanying standing female figures with their flexioned postures reveal feminine charm and grace. A different treatment of eye-brows and careful delineation of the

ornaments of Siddhaikavīra is indicative of the style of the ninth century and presages the ornamental elaborations of the following century. The modelling of Siddhaikavīra is very close to the Farrukhabad Lokanātha and Siddhaikavīra (Fig. 14) of the ninth century.

A fragmentary bust of Bodhisattva from Sārnāth[34] (Fig. 27) showing the rounded contour with broad shoulders, fuller arms and a gracefully attenuated waist, is reminiscent of the Gupta plastic norms. The face is rounded and full with broad forehead. The clearly marked eye-brows and eye-lids have gained separate volumes. The nose though damaged appears to have been sharp and pointed, and the lips are tightly closed and firm. His ornaments are simple but prominently shown especially the headdress, ear-rings, necklace and armlets. The female *caurī*-bearer on his right is remarkable for its tender appearance.

A Tārā image from Sārnāth[35] (Fig. 28) stands in a slightly bent pose against a plain stela. The companion figures include a male and a female on two sides, and an adorer (*ārādhaka*) with folded hands below the pedestal. A miniature *dhyānī* Buddha on a full blown lotus is shown on the upper right corner of the stela. The face of the Tārā is much damaged. Her physiognomy has been distinctly marked with prominent and round full breasts, fleshy abdomen and broad palms. Her jewellery include a pair of circular broad ear-rings, flat necklace, a garland worn in the fashion of a sacred thread, armlets, chain-like girdle and anklets. She holds the stalk of a stylised blue lotus (*indivara*) in her left hand. The sculpture is interesting for its volume. The style of Sārnāth Tārā shows affinity to Eastern Indian tradition.[36]

As an important political centre as well as nucleus of artistic activity in the Gurjara-Pratīhāra period,[37] Kanauj still preserves a number of interesting sculptures of stylistic significance.[38] One such sculpture represents Pārvatī-*pariṇaya*[39] ascribable to the ninth century (Fig. 29). In this relief Śiva and Pārvatī occupy a large section of the composition, shown as they are inside a cave. Śiva's bare torso is balanced by a *dhoti* below. Śiva figure firmly stands on his left leg, the right is relaxed. His right hand is stretched out to receive the right hand of the bride, while the left rests on his thigh. His hair are arranged in an elaborate *jaṭāmukuṭa* with ornamental enrichment. The calm and the assured expression of the lord is arresting. To the right of Śiva, Pārvatī, the shy bride, stands with her right hand extended across her body for the acceptance by the lord. Clothed in a diapha-

nous garment, she is lightly bended with jewellery—thin bangles, a pair of bracelets, a necklace, ear-rings and anklets. The hair are pulled back and tied in a large elegant bun and a pearl diadem in front. Between Śiva and Pārvatī is a small Brahmā seated on his haunches, as a priest officiating at the wedding rites. The wavy flames of the sacred fire are lurking from the altar placed in front of Śiva. A few other figures in different postures are also shown on the pedestal in response to the narrative requirements. Immediately above these figures to the left stands Sūrya on a full blown lotus. The upper part of the panel is separated from the lower by rocks suggestive of the locale, the Himālayas. Above the rocky formation are represented the figures of the Dikpālas or guardians of the Quarters, with their characteristic mounts. In spite of the occurrence here of several figures, the central emphasis is on Śiva and Pārvatī. In their general treatment the reflection of the Gupta classicism is very pronounced, even when there is an indication of sharper features that progressively develop through the early medieval period. Thematically as well as compositionally, the Kanauj panel reminds one of the similar type of representation at Ellora.[40] The Western Indian images of Śiva, however, appear to be throbbing with superhuman vitality which is unique to that area and times. Here the vigour seems to have been replaced by tame grace hinted in the placid smile of the god. A noticeable feature is the fully smooth cheeks of the goddess, contrasting with her pointed chin and nose. It seems that in delineating female beauty the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley sculptor followed a separate vision from that of Western Indian counterparts. Though compositionally simple, the Kanauj relief succeeds in hinting a naturalistic touch with cloud forms just suggested. In the execution of the Dikpālas, the artist seems to have worked with a greater sense of freedom and as such variegated their postures as if to display their bodies in all possible artistic angles. In contrast with the formation of principal figures below, the Dikpālas and their mounts show a greater sense of movement, as may be evident in the treatment of the buffalo with its front legs raised, the galloping horse and the elephant with its swinging trunk.

In the *mukhaliṅga* sculpture from Kanauj, carved on four faces of the smooth and round surface of the *liṅga* (phallus) the artist has chiselled out the heads of Śiva and his consort Pārvatī in bold relief (Fig. 30). The modelling of the faces of Śiva and Pārvatī exhibits a marked maturity. They have long eyes, bow-shaped eye-brows, a sharp nose, pointed chin and thick sensitive lips. Śiva's large matted

hair is studded with jewels. His long pendulous ears with ear-rings seem to have gained separate volume. Pārvatī is also shown tastefully bejewelled with a fillet, long ear-ornaments and flat necklace. A round bun upon the head of Pārvatī is noticeable. Stylistically, the *mukhaliṅga* sculpture is very close to the Pārvatī-*pariṇaya* of the same place (Fig. 29).

Tenth Century

The discussion on the tenth century Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley sculpture may begin with an image of Buddha from Farrukhabad[42] (Fig. 31), showing the Master seated on a raised lotus throne in *bhūmisparśa mudrā*. The falling end of the hide carpet coming out from the throne separates the pedestal into two parts. Each part consists of a kneeling adorer and *gaja-vyāla*. A decorative backrest is raised upto the shoulder of the Buddha figure. The horizontal bar of the throne is surmounted at the two ends by *makara* heads. The figures representing Indra and Brahmā are shown standing on two sides of the Master on full blown lotuses issuing from the corners of the throne, a device already noticed in the Gupta sculpture (Figs. 5-6). Above the backrest is the oval-shaped conventionalised lotus nimbus. Just above the nimbus is the Bodhi tree, shaped like a parasol, with foliage and leaves naturalistically delineated. On the two upper ends of the stela are shown a pair of flying celestials amid the clouds.

The Farrukhabad Buddha is, however, executed somewhat differently from the celebrated Sārnāth *dharmacakrapravartana* Buddha (Fig. 8). The difference is particularly in the plastic treatment of the body. The Classical abstraction of the Sārnāth Buddha is here replaced by more rounded configuration. The other-worldliness seen in the Sārnāth sculpture is likewise lacking in this instance. The facial expression shows awareness of the outer world instead. A clear bulge has appeared at the lower abdomen below the navel. Further, the lions associated with the throne are conventionalised. The decorated cushion behind the lotus base below is also indicative of the artist's proclivity for details.

The Tīrthaṅkara Ṛṣabhanātha from Mathura[43] is shown seated on a *triratha* and two-tiered throne (Fig. 32). The head of the Jina and the upper portion of the stela are missing. On the throne face are shown two kneeling figures of devotees. At the lower end are seven standing figures of Jinas in the *kāyotsarga* pose in three compartments separated from each other by pilasters. In the upper section

we find two conventional lions and a wheel, decorative *ajināsana* hanging from the seat touching the latter. On both sides of the projecting sections of the stela is a vertical row of five figures, of which four are Jinas in meditative poses. The composition of the figures upon the sculpture bears some closeness to the classical idiom. When examined closely it, however, shows a definite hardening of the flesh. The incision of the waistlines is sharper, while the lower abdomen is somewhat fleshy; these characteristics are absent in the Gupta examples. Much of the classical refinements can still be noticed in the panel, but when we turn to details, such as the treatment of limbs, couchant lions, *ajināsana* etc., medieval nuances become evident.

The sculpture of the goddess Mahāmāyurī[44] from Uttar Pradesh is an interesting specimen of early medieval art (Fig. 33). The multi-armed *devī* is seated on a lotus cushion. The pedestal is *triratha* in plan. The rectangular stela is plain and simple, the circular halo being shown as a full blown lotus. The eyes of the goddess are open, evidently looking at her reflection in the mirror held by her front left hand. The disposition of the many arms around the central figure is harmonious. The rounded face with a prominent chin approximates the ideal conception of a betel-leaf. The eye-brows are long and deeply cut. The nose is sharp and lips are full and closed. Her jewellery is plain and simple: a long necklace, a pair of armlets and wristlets. The ornaments do not overburden the deity. She wears a striped *sāri*. The arms, the thighs and the legs, to which the drapery clings fast, are roundedly modelled. The contour of the limbs is sharp and the body content appears somewhat stiff. This is according to Saraswati[45] "possibly as a corollary to a hesitating intrusion of the medieval concept". The pedestal is, however, fully crowded with attenuated miniature forms.

In the Lachagir relief[46] (Fig. 34), Śiva and his consort Umā are shown seated close to each other on a raised *triratha* throne. The rectangular stela with pointed apex is shown crowded with figure sculptures. The same slenderness as we have noticed in the Farrukhabad Buddha (Fig. 29) may be seen in the Umā-Maheśvara forms. The facial expression of Śiva is softened and the spiritual introspection is totally absent. In modelling, the figure of Umā has captured the charm and sensuousness of female beauty, in the rounded arms and legs, large round and fleshy breasts and supple abdomen. The ornaments are also selective and treated in separate relief. The semi-diaphanous garments have acquired independent volumes at the ends.

In the delineation of accompanying figures, the sculptor has shown adequate freedom of composition and treatment.

The Lachagir Umā-Maheśvara is a sculptural example doubtless of a high order. The cluttering figures of the stela enliven the composition, the commanding is the figure of the divine couple seated in an intimate pose. Their postures undoubtedly indicate the move on the part of the sculptor towards achieving third dimension. Here one may notice a balance between minute delineation as represented by the ornaments of the deities and bold chiselling as found in the carving of the divine couple as well as the surrounding figures including the crouching bull below the seat.

The Viṣuṇ-Trivikrama from Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh[46a] (Figs. 35-36) is an interesting paradigm of the tenth century style. The heavenward thrust of the right leg is a clear indication of the limitless strength of the deity, who, however, is shown with a smiling countenance and a posture of extreme self-assurance. The rectangular stela behind is plain. It shows an elaborate disc-like rounded lotus nimbus right behind the head of the god. The nimbus is rimmed by a beaded border. The principal figure is modelled in the round and the stela behind is cut away to accentuate its plastic quality. The god is reachly bejewelled with a crown and other usual ornaments. The other figures in the narrative (Fig. 36) express appropriate sentiments. The smallness of these attending figures helps the spectator to visualize the majesty of Trivikrama manifestation. The remarkable aspect of the sculpture is the high level of workmanship noticeable in the jewel-like finish of the ornaments, glowing finesse of the main figure, the elaborate but minute delineation of the motifs on the nimbus. A clear indication of the sculptor's mastery in configuring perspective is apparent in the position in which the wheel (*cakra*) is held by Trivikrama.

Mention next be made of an extremely crowded composition again coming from Kanauj,[47] which deserves special notice for its iconographic[48] as well as stylistic significance (Fig. 37). A work of majestic quality this is a well preserved example of Viṣṇu-Viśvarūpa. Instead of the usual rigid frontal pose of Viṣṇu, the image shows an *ābhaṅga* pose on a pedestal against a semicircular stela. The central head of the god is that of a human being, while those of the sides are of a fish and tortise, a boar and lion. The image is made of buff sandstone and characterised by a dignified repose. The physique is pro-

portionate with rounded arms, muscular shoulders and a prominent chest. The full lips are enlivened with soft sensitiveness. The upper portion of the figure is bare, the lower garment reaches upto the ankles and is typically diaphanous. The lower garment with stylised pleats covers the legs. The rich ornaments of the figures include a heavy headdress, large ear-ornaments, flat necklace with beaded borders, armlets designed after snake's coil, wristlets and rings. The chain-shaped waistband is fastened below the navel. Viṣṇu is eight-armed, two of his right hands are mutilated. From the position of the remaining six it is possible to appreciate the judiciousness of the composition and movement. The merit of the work lies not in the central figure but in the overall composition of the entire stela. The sculpture appears to be conceived in different planes. In the forefront is the miniature figure of a *Nāginī-kāṇyā* with her snake tail coiled in between the legs of Viṣṇu. Then comes the principle figure and his attendants on two sides, one of which happens to be the bewildered figure of Arjuna, shown to his left. The attendant figures are delineated with a lively interest and show through their stances and facial expressions the normal human qualities. In the background of the central figure is the semicircular stela, which is, as stated above, rather crowded with various incarnations of Viṣṇu, Rudras, Ādityas, Vasus etc.[49]

There are two clear directions in the arrangements of the composition; one is vertical and the other is horizontal. But in their vertical thrust they ultimately converge with the figure of Brahmā, caping the entire stela. The sculptor here unfolds in a magnificent way the conception of the cosmic dimensions of Viśvarūpa revealed by Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna. There is no doubt that from the visual point of view the Kanauj Viṣṇu-Viśvarūpa belongs to the same aesthetic grade in which we place the Kashipur Viṣṇu-Trivikrama (Fig. 35). In each sculpture the artist has attempted to present a convincing plastic representation of his chosen theme, *albiet*, compositionally speaking, Kashipur Trivikrama (Fig. 35) is simpler than the Kanauj Viśvarūpa (Fig. 37).

The Gaṇapati made of buff sandstone from Farrukhabad[50] (Fig. 31) in its stunted, flabby and potbellied from is depicted as delightfully absorbed in dancing. Four accompanying figures, two on each side, are shown playing music to the tune of which the principal figure is dancing. The instruments involved are drums, flute and cymbals. The nimbus behind the head of the principal figure is,

however, missing. Physiognomically, the figure of Gaṇapati follows the iconographic prescriptions. The treatment of his flesh is remarkable for a sensitive and smooth finish. His eye-brows have been well laid out, while the trunk swings. His jewellery consists of a cap-like headdress, necklace, armlets, bracelets, waistband and anklet. He also wears sacred cord with stylised beaded border. Compositionally as well as stylistically the Farrukhabad Gaṇapati is no doubt a creation of high order. The composition has attained in the dancing pose of Gaṇeśa a new dynamism revealing the inherent joy and pleasure of existence. The musical background provided by the attending figures enhances the joyous mood.

The Sārnāth Avalokiteśvara[51] head (Fig. 39) duplicates the placidness of Gupta tradition and shows restraint and discipline. There is also a touch of sensitiveness noticeable in his full lips and pointed chin. The elaborate *jaṭā* and the beaded headdress are products to a fair degree of meticulous care and attention. The Avalokiteśvara head shows characteristics of the post-Gupta sculpture. Further, a pronounced sensitiveness in the facial expression connects it to Eastern Indian version of the early medieval trend as represented by the Nalanda bronzes.[52]

The Vajrasattva image from Sārnāth[53] (Fig. 40) is quite interesting from stylistic point of view. The figure is seated cross-legged on a raised cushion· The stela is plain and large disc-like nimbus is carved out of it. The execution of the figure of Vajrasattva is bold and it appears to throb with vividity. The ornaments appear to possess separate volumes. Remarkable is his cylindrical headgear with two *dhyānī* Buddhas carved on it. His eyes are open and he appears to be fully enlivened with his about-to-speak lips.

The sculpture of Vasudhārā from Sārnāth[54] is damaged (Fig. 41). She stands in a slight *ābhaṅga* pose. The edge of the oval-shaped plain stela is scalloped with a beaded border. The slightly elongated goddess has a soft contour. In her sensitively rounded arms and legs, prominent breasts, narrow waist, broad hips and thighs, the sculptor tried to capture the traditional concept of female beauty. The eyes show separate relief in lower eye-lids. Her full lips are closed while the chin is prominent. The design of her ornaments has received the artist's special care.

The sculpture of Tārā from Sārnāth[55] (Fig. 42) is shown in

lalitāsana on a double whorled lotus throne. Her foot rests on a crouching lion carved on the pedestal, while a garland-bearing female adorer is on her right side. The plain stela behind rises upto the top with a semicircular end. Upon the left corner of the stela occurs a miniature figure of *dhyānī* Buddha, seated on a full blown lotus throne. The central Tārā figure has a rotund torso, slender arms and legs with prominent breasts, fleshy abdomen and a deep navel. The sculpture is replete with grace and sensuousness. The oval face shows deeply cut eye-brows; the nose and the lips are damaged. Her jewellery include *mukuṭa*, ear-rings, necklace, armlets, wristlets, girdle and anklets. Her hair is shown in a traditionally arranged rounded bun. The Sārnāth Tārā is very close in style to the Eastern Indian parallels, particularly in respect of physiognomical treatment as well as of the stela formation.[56] Although heavier in treatment than this sculpture, another Tārā image (Fig. 43), also from Sārnāth,[57] belongs to the same plastic category. Here the carving is all through bold and rounded. The play of light and shade is judicious and the Tārā is in a relaxed sitting pose. Mobility is suggested in the attending figures and also in the formation of the cloud. Though the face is slightly damaged, the long and open eyes with bow-like brows and ridged eye-lids, full and fleshy lips and sensitive chin make the facial expression of the deity earthy and sensuous. These Tārā images (Figs. 42-43) may be compared with the sculpture of Vāgeśvarī from Eastern India dated A.D. 910,[58] for broad similarity in plastic treatment, especially of the fleshy abdomenal part.

Durgā in her Mahiṣamardinī aspect is one of the favourite subjects of medieval Indian art. The image of Mahiṣamardinī, found at Benaras[59] (Fig. 44), shows simple composition. The pedestal is raised in one plane, and the rectangular backslab carried upto the top, similar to that of the Buddha sculpture from Farrukhabad (Fig. 31). The space immediately to the back of the principal figure is decorated with a boldly carved lotus nimbus with beaded edge. The *devī* is engaged in killing the buffalo demon. She is robust in her body formation and the carving is all through bold and tridimensional. Her right leg rides over the buffalo, while she supports herself on her left. A slight diagonalism of the composition may be marked in the standing posture of the goddess. She strikes the demon at his abdomenal point. The lion is shown in its ferocious mood while the buffalo appears to be somewhat docile, sensing its end. Of the two attending figures, the male is on the goddess's left and the female on her right. The Mahiṣamardinī sculpture is significant for the realization

of vitality. Here, too, we find the cutting of the stela just behind the central figure, a device which helps realise the third dimension of the sculpture. Unfortunately, the face and most part of her hands are damaged. Nevertheless, it shows some traits of the post-Gupta art, while there are also indications of medieval characteristics in the oval-shaped nimbus, totally disengaged background and somewhat over-ornamentation of the principal figure.

Another Mahiṣamardinī sculpture coming from Etah[60] (Fig. 45) also shows the goddess in her exploit of killing the buffalo demon. But when considered from the stylistic viewpoint it breathes a somewhat different air. Less influenced by the Gupta norms this image reveals a composition bold in concept as well as carving and is remarkable for the compact arrangement of shapes The goddess in her frontal stance places the right leg on the back of the demon who kneels down being pressed by the weight exerted by the deity and also the thrust of the trident (*triśula*). The ornaments shown on her body and also the implements in her different hands join in the cadence of the dynamism commensurate with the delineation of the goddess, the demon and the lion vehicle.

In the Asarpur (Benaras) Sūrya image,[61] the deity is shown along with the two attendants on the pedestal (Fig. 46) The rectangular backslab is plain, and the circular disc-like nimbus is engraved with a beaded border. The sun god with his Northerner's dress bears his usual iconic distinctions. He wears a decorative cylindrical meter, revealing lọcks of hair which fall over the shoulders. His ornaments are simple and consist of ear-rings, a pearl-necklace with a central plaque, wristlets and a chain girdle, the loose end of which forms a loop between the legs to dangle over the right thigh. The edge of the tunic is brocaded and the baldric is slung across the thighs. A long sword is suspended from the baldric on the left side. The Asarpur Sūrya appears to be delineated in the best tradition of the post-Gupta art. The treatment of the body is sensitive and the facial expression lively. For canonical justification the figure is shown standing in strict frontal pose. But the attendant figures with their triple bend are a study in contrast and undoubtedly balance the rhythm to this otherwise static composition.

The sculpture of Cakreśvarī from Parkhna, Mathurā,[62] stands in a strictly frontal pose on garuḍa (Fig. 47). The head of the goddess is mutilated. The plain and simple rectangular backslab is carried

up from the pedestal. The aureole is carved out from the backslab and is circular in outline with a full blown lotus motif. Above the nimbus is a parasol. The flying celestials are as usual shown on two sides. The standing females on her either side are the *caurī*-bearing attendants. The diaphanous draperies and the simple jewellery worn by the goddess are well displayed. The principal figure though full and rounded is stiff in contrast to the freely flexioned attending figures as was also noticed in the Asarpur Sūrya image (Fig. 46).

In the Śiva and Pārvatī relief from Bharwari,[63] Allahabad (Fig. 48), the rectangular backslab is plain. The principal as well as accessory figures are shown placed on a raised pedestal. Behind the head of each of the deities is a large oval nimbus ending with foliated petals. The relief clearly betrays the grace and suppleness typical of the post-Gupta art. The ornamentation is rich and elegant, and a balance between the plain and decorative surfaces of the body has been effectively struck.

Two other images of Śiva carved on the architectural fragments may be mentioned here for the significance they bear in regard to the study of the tenth century Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley sculpture. One is from Bhiṭā[64] (Fig. 49), and the other is from Garhwa[65] (Fig. 50), both the sites belong to Allahabad District. The Bhiṭā sculpture is a four-armed Śiva who stands in a graceful *tribhaṅga* pose. The flexion of the body relaxes the figure. The face is ovular and shows thick closed lips, broad chin and open eyes under the well-ridged long eye-brows. But despite an attempt to represent him in a dignified bearing, the face only succeeds in showing earthiness. The naturalistic treatment of the bull is noteworthy. The Śiva relief from Garhwa (Fig. 50) may be stylistically grouped with the latter image. Here, one may notice the similar sensitive treatment of the body surface. An additional qualitative feature of the image happens to be the sharp line that comes from the right armpit reaching down to the right foot. The *tribhaṅga* pose noted in it immediately reminds one of the similar standing posture of the *dvārapālaka* figures at Ellora.[66]

The figure generally held as depicting Rukmiṇī from Nokhas in the Etah District, Uttar Pradesh[67] (Fig. 51), is one of the most exquisite sculptures of the period. In the making of this sculpture the artist made convention subservient to delicate naturalism, and as such the female figure stands out in all its grace and glory. Unfortunately, the head of the figure is gone so also is the lower part of the legs. But

the slender lines of the long-limbed body are carved with a rare sense of tenderness. Its smooth and softened plasticity and the suave contours are remarkable. The restrained sensuousness of the lady is profoundly appealing. This shows a completely harmonious blending of etherial grace and voluptuousness. She seems to glow from within, her selective personal ornaments tastefully drape her body. The pleats of the diaphanous lower garment exhibit independent volume. Zimmer[68] has rightly observed: "The main impact, however, is made not by the proportion of the figure, but by the subtle and detailed interpretation of its animate surface. The artist's chisel has glided caressingly along this living organism, everywhere halting to record the infinitesimal form of some subtle nuance."

The fragmentary sculpture representing *Skanda-abhiṣeka* from Kanauj, now in the National Museum[69] (Fig. 52), may be considered after the Nokhas Rukmiṇī. In the treatment of the torso, the Kanauj image shows rotund shoulders, broad chest and slightly attenuated waist. His smiling face glows in soft sensitiveness. The ornaments of the principal figure are prominent and expertly executed. In the fillet, necklace and the sacred cord, the use of beads is noticeable. The hair arrangement is also interesting. From the consideration of their plastic execution, the figures of Brahmā and Viṣṇu engaged in *abhiṣecana* by pouring water from pitchers on Skanda-Kārttikeya are also extremely interesting. They are executed with considerable freedom and, therefore, there is no usual iconic stiffness ruining them. Instead, in their triple-bend pose and extended arms, a lively rhythm generally found in 'working-men' may be noted.

The sculpture of Vaiṣṇavī from Benaras[70] (Fig. 53) has been carved out in high relief. The figure as it exists now has suffered damage, particularly in its lower portion. It seems that originally the figure was shown in a dancing posture. She is in fully modelled rounded form. Her curved shoulders, fruit-like prominent breasts and meatly abdomen proclaim sensuousness and her facial expression points to mundane intentions. Wearing the usual ornaments, the figure is chiselled with attention to minute detail. She discloses a predilection for volume and may be noted as one of the significant sculptural pieces of the tenth century Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley.

Two architectural fragments with figure sculptures are found from Mānikpur, Pratāpgarh, Allahabad District (Figs. 54-55). One of the reliefs depicts Pārvatī-*pariṇaya* theme[71] (Fig. 54). Here Śiva with

flexions in his body turns towards his bride whose right hand is held in his own. Seated between them is Brahmā, bending to pour libations over the sacred fire. To their left is Nandi, and to the right an attendant, either left unfinished or subsequently damaged. Two circular pilasters frame the niches. In the plastic treatment of the principal figures pliant volume and soft suppleness are noticeable. The face of Pārvatī is full, has broad and open eyes, straight nose, closed lips and pointed chin. She is bejewelled with large prominent circular ear-rings, a flat and broad necklace, armlets and wristlets, girdle and anklets. Her hair is arranged in a bun and jewels are set on it at regular intervals, and a tassel dangles at her back. Śiva is also adorned with an elaborate *jaṭāmukuṭa* and other usual ornaments. The background accentuates the intermingling play of light and shade on the carved surface of the slab. Pārvatī's corresponding backward tilt in the face of Śiva's forward move is highly befitting of a shy bride. In the soft and sensuous modelling, combined with humane and dramatic expression, this relief of Mānikpur is indeed noteworthy.

The other panel from Mānikpur[72] (Fig. 55) shows Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī and their attendants. Rounded pilasters have divided the entire panel into three compartments or niches. The central niche displays the standing figures of Viṣṇu with his consort Lakṣmī in a very intimate pose. Attendant celestial figures are shown on the two sides and on the top of the divine couple. From the stylistic and compositional consideration the central niche of the present panel is similar to the fragment depicting the Pārvatī-*pariṇaya* theme (Fig. 53). Two other Viṣṇu figures found on the flanking niches are also equally interesting for their flexions, proportion, modelling and facial expressions. In modelling as well as distribution of light and shade the Mānikpur reliefs retain the grace of the ninth century. But such elements, namely, the diagonal disposition of the body, the sumptuous ornamentation and the moulded pilasters show definite advances over the earlier tradition.

In the history of Indian plastic art the figures representing *surasundarīs* or *nāyikās* occupy a significant place because of the imagination of the artist who vied with the poet. In the art activities of the Gupta-Vakataka and post-Gupta periods they are little more frequent to meet with. They not only continued to be carved but figure much more frequently in the medieval age. On the walls of the medieval temples, the *surasundarīs* and *gandharvas* are portrayed in various poses

and postures and different moods and sentiments. Despite the regional or stylistic differences, the *surasundarīs* and *gandharvas* represent all through a joyous and sensuous world. A number of such *surasundarī* figures came from Jāmsot in Allahabad District (Figs. 56-57, 60).[73] In fact in the study of the tenth century Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley sculpture, the contribution of Jāmsot is worthy of mention both from the point of view of quality and quantity of its yield.

The *surasundarīs* and *gandharvas* from Jāmsot (Figs. 56-61) represent the conventional characteristics like the suave forms, emphasis on the attributes of fecundity, the graceful curves of the body and forceful movements. The sculptor possibly was very eager to make the most of his mastery of material and technique. He twists and contorts the bodies of the delightful females whom he invests with mundane moods and activities such as adorning themselves or as sporting or making love (Figs. 56-57, 59-60). The figures are found in various degrees of twists and turns (Figs. 56-60), their appeal being always sensuous. It appears that the sculptor experienced a special joy in executing the fleshily sensitive contours of the female forms. Not being satisfied with *tribhaṅga* or triple bend of the body (Figs. 57, 60), he experiments with *atibhaṅga* (Figs. 56, 58-59). The tradition of sensuousness figuring prominently in the *nāyikā* as in Mathurā of early centuries of Christian era had come to acquire a new life, if not meaning, in the medieval age. An individual figure shows a judicious balance in the execution of fully developed, sometimes a little heavy, female forms and in the studied distribution of ornaments on their body. Some of the *surasundarīs* are found beaming with smile which at times is intimate and provocative.

A harmonious and rhythmic arrangement of figures may be found in the architectural fragment from Sorāon, Allahabad District,[74] depicting a musical and dancing scene (Fig. 62). The panel is divided by regular interval of pavilions containing male and female figures. The spaces in between the pavilions are found covered with figures dancing or playing music. The pavilions are decorated with moulded pilasters and *caitya*-dormer motifs. The figures inside show elegant poses. The disciplined treatment of the plastic mass is evident in their facial positions and movements of limbs. The proper distribution of light and shade brings out the relief effect. The compositional unity is pleasing and evocative.

Another architectural piece, consisting of four niches with

pediment placed vertically one above the other, is found from Bārā, Allahabad District[75] (Fig. 63). The round and moulded pilasters provide support to brackets above which there is a decorative *caitya*-dormer motif. The niches from the top downwards contain the figure of a man leaning on a club, Kṛṣṇa slaying the demon, a standing male figure with body in triple bend and seated potbellied figure probably representing Vaiśravaṇa.

The two architectural pieces described above (Figs. 62-63) stylistically belong to a single stage in the evolution of Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley sculpture and may be placed towards the closing years of the tenth century. The closest stylistic parallel of the Sorāon and Bārā sculptures are the tenth century temple sculptures of Rajasthan.[76] The same feeling for the dramatic in visualisation of human shapes, different attitudes and movements may also be noted in these reliefs. The chaste chiselling of the architectural motifs is also a pointer in the same direction.

Of the Viṣṇu Trivikrama from Bāghārā, Allahabad[77] (Fig. 64) the lower portion is missing. His body is thrust outward, and the left leg is raised heavenward, the right leg in all probability was to rest firmly on the ground. With broad shoulders, rounded arms and columnar thighs the body exudes vigour and strength. The face is long with a sharp and pointed chin. His wide eyes are bordered by prominent lids. The broken nose seems originally to have been broad and blunt. The lips are heavy and extended. The entire facial expression of the god is earthy and mundane. He wears a decorative cylindrical meter. A large ring suspends from each of his ears. He wears a double necklace along with pendants, armlets and wristlets. The waistband is rather heavy from which a tasselled ornament droops between the legs and narrow decorated ribbons are looped on both thighs. The sacred cord with beaded borders and the long garland are found to be treated conventionally. This Viṣṇu Trivikrama shows a new direction in the tenth century Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley sculpture. Its pronounced vigour and the emphasis on diagonalism are significant. It represents a compositional trend which came to be further stressed during the following centuries. The figure also appears to be surging forth. This is also a trend of the fully developed medieval style. In the feeling of ornaments also, it clearly reflects the medieval trend. The artist here seems more concerned to show off virtuosity by detailed delineation of ornaments and the finish of the surfaces than to infuse higher values of visual aesthetics.

Hence it is logical to place this Bāghārā Trivikrama Viṣṇu towards the end of this section, as it stylistically looks forward to the eleventh century—the period during which the Indian sculpture of the Valley took to an unmixed medieval character.

Eleventh Century

The study of the eleventh century Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley sculpture must begin with a reference to a number of Jina Tīrthaṅkara images found from Mathurā. This is, however, not because they are marked with all the clear medieval accompaniments we find in some other sculptures of the century, but because of the incidence of a number of dated images. Of these Jina Aṛṣṭanemi[78] is singly represented (Fig. 65). He is seated in meditation on a lion throne. Behind the pedestal's pilasters are half-concealed standing figures of devotees. An ornamented *ajināsana* hangs between the lion figures. The Jina figure is flanked by a male *caurī*-bearer in arched *bhaṅga* on his either side. Flying celestials with garland are seen hovering above. In spite of its late date the physiognomy of Aṛṣṭanemi exhibits the typical Mathuraesque volume as noticed in the Tīrthaṅkara images dated in A.D. 1023 (Fig. 9) and A.D. 1047 (Fig. 11). The swelling chest and the bulge at the lower abdomen below the navel that have been marked in the image dated A.D. 1047 are also present in this example. Though carved following the iconometrics of Gupta *dhyanāsana* images, its robustness is very much earth-bound and the smile that enlivens the countenance also indicates a psychological attitude at once far removed from the Gupta ideal of introvertness. Not, then, for its plastic treatment, but for its overt earthiness, we may place this sculpture of Aṛṣṭanemi in the eleventh century.

The Tīrthaṅkara Śāntinātha from Kauśāmbī[79] (Fig. 66) is also seated in meditative pose on a conventional lotus throne. On either side of the deity in vertical ascending order is a male *caurī*-bearer, Hiranyendra on elephant and a flying *mālādhara*. A pair of deer flank the *dharmacakra* in the centre of the pedestal. Above the central figure is the usual triple parasol. The interesting aspect of the central figure is its psychological treatment. While the Neminātha (Fig. 65) is marked for its massiveness, the Śāntinātha sheds much of his physical weight and since the image hails from Kauśāmbī, it shows a plastic reminiscence of the Sārnāth tradition.

Next in sequence is the seated Pārśvanātha from Mathurā[80] (Fig. 67), now in the Mathurā Museum. The sculpture is damaged. The hands of the Tīrthaṅkara and of his attendants and the upper part of the stela are missing. The figure of Pārśvanātha here presents all the typical features of the age, such as the lion throne and the body-physique noticeable in the Mathurā image dated A.D. 1047 (Fig. 11). Conventionalisation is apparent in the treatment of the lions, while the torso of the principal figure shows typical Mathuraesque volume and robustness. Moreover, the breasts are more prominent and the bulge in the lower abdomen is shown in a clear manner. The attending figures disclose a plastic treatment which is close enough to that of their counterparts in the Mathurā image dated A.D. 1047.

The sharpness of chiselling, a distinctive feature of medieval art, may be discerned in a *Caturmukha* Tīrthaṅkara image from Etah[81] (Fig. 68). The formal scheme shows four Tīrthaṅkaras standing back to back, on a lotus pedestal. Their nude forms display minimum variation of the plastic surface, and in spite of their classical proportions the figures tend to be abstract. But this plainliness has been counterbalanced by minute and detailed delineation of the lotus petals beneath the *caitya-vṛkṣa* above. Care has also been taken in executing the details in the hands of the figures; and this may be apparent from the treatment of the eye-brows, lips, hairdo and also the cheeks and chins. The quadruple (*Caturmukha*) is in excellent state of preservation and appears to have been carved sometime after the Tīrthaṅkara of A.D. 1077 (Fig. 12). From the overall mastery of its execution it may be regarded as one of the most interesting specimens of the eleventh century Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley sculpture.

On grounds of treatment of their stela, four images, namely, Śāntinātha from Pābhosā[82] (Fig. 69), Sūrya from Kārā[83] (Fig. 70), Kṣemaṅkarī from Allahabad[84] (Fig. 71) and the Sūrya from Karcana[85] (Fig. 72), all hailing from Allahabad, may be discussed together. There are, no doubt, differences in posture and disposition of the deities; there is definitely a unifying factor in the architecturally conceived stela found behind all of them. Following the characteristics of such formation it is possible to trace a sequence of evolution among them. The figure of Śāntinātha shows *pañcaratha* plan of the pedestal while the stela is found to be horizontally divided into *trirathas*. The stela of the two Sūrya images (Figs. 70, 72) and the Kṣemaṅkarī (Fig. 71) are of the full-fledged *pañcaratha* plan, showing

five-fold horizontal division of their pedestal as well as the stela. Clearly hence, the image reflects an advanced stage of medievalism when compared to the figure of Śāntinātha of Pābhosā. The advance is just not limited to the number of *ratha* projections; it is also noticed in the treatment of details of the stela. Again, among the latter images, the Kārā Sūrya may be distinguished from the Karcana figure on the basis of the treatment of their respective stela. From the compositional arrangement, the stela of the Kārā Sūrya is nearer to the Pābhosā Śāntinātha; while the Karcana Sūrya remains distinguished by the back slab, a much more elaborate and intricate a piece in plan and execution. The Kṣemaṅkarī image may be placed between the two Sūrya images because it shows delicate carving similar to that of Karcana Sūrya, but in the compositional plan the decorative elements are decked out in a fashion comparable to the Kārā Sūrya. In all these four images the stela background is divided by architectural moulds, niches are flanked by pilasters, pavilions etc. Human figures are represented in groups in order to create varied patterns of light and shade. Except the figure of Kṣemaṅkarī all the principal deities in the group are stereotyped. The Kṣemaṅkarī figure possesses a slightly forward movement of the left leg and the elegant slight bend (*abhaṅga*). The flowing garland adds to the overall linear rhythm. Due to damage wrought on her face, it is difficult further to elaborate upon her characteristic qualities. The Karcana Sūrya is also noteworthy for two points; first, it shows a semicircular halo bordered by a series of perforated triangles; second, he wears a necklace which indicates a pronounced plastic realisation. These two characteristics are found to have been further emphasised in the late eleventh as well as twelfth century sculptures of the region. In the words of Kramrisch[86] "once more a ponderous bodily type replaces the slender figure yet despite the stereotyped rendering it retains a vague loveliness. Independence of ornaments, the flexibility of the accompanying figures, the richness of the stela keep on increasing."

Two *devī* images from Benaras, in the collection of the Bharat Kalā Bhavan, may be examined next. One of these is a figure of Cakreśvarī[87] (Fig. 73), and the other is the Mahiṣamardinī[88] (Fig. 74). The Cakreśvarī stands erect on a plain *pañcaratha* pedestal against the background of a bold relief stela, ending in a pyramidal triangle. The *ratha* projections are found to be carried on the pedestal which contains usual leogryph motifs, *vidyādharas* and the four accessory female figures, two on each side of the *devī*. She is in strictly frontal

pose and visualised almost in terms of third dimension, her immediate background being cut out. The aureole in its star-shaped design is perforated. This device of cutting out the stela at the back of the principal deity is also met with in the second *devī* image of the group, that of Mahiṣamardinī. The latter is shown in wrath as she slays the demon Mahiṣa. The pedestal is *triratha* in plan and the same can be said of the stela behind, which contains figures representing her associates. Here, too, the usual leogryph and *makara* motifs are found and the back side of the goddess is cut off allowing some light to come from behind. Though there is no dearth of figures in the entire scheme of the sculpture, each of the forms is, so to say, allotted its own place and therefore there is no cluttering in the composition.

The remarkable seated Śiva image from Gārhwā, Allahabad[89] (Fig. 75) is without its head as well as arms. The legs are in *vajrāsana* pose. Since the earlier classical tenderness has disappeared, rather a slim though not disproportionate figure has emerged. The geometry and abstractness of the anatomy constitute the significant elements in treatment of this Gārhwā Śiva. He wears sumptuous ornaments of which a double necklace and a waistband are still discernible, while one of its broken arms retains a fragment of an elaborate armlet. The ornaments are individually treated in the fully developed medieval style and are applied on the body to make with their plastic volume.

The Sārnāth Śiva[90] (Fig. 76) shows the triple bend flexion and wears ornaments similar to those of the Gārhwā Śiva (Fig. 75). But in spite of his inclination for movement, the image shows a physique dissimilar to Gārhwā Śiva; the former is somewhat flabby and stunted.

The Bodhisattva Maitreya from Sārnāth[91] (Fig. 77) is interesting for its decorative elements. An elaborate headdress, heavy necklace, waistband and the armlets, and the wavy pattern of the *dhoti* are clearly indicative of the sculpture's medieval affiliation. Nevertheless, this Maitreya is set apart from almost all the eleventh century sculptures discussed so far by virtue of its intense carving. This boldness is recognizable not only in the volume of figure but also in the carving of three-dimensional blue lotus and also the petals of the lotus motif shown on its halo. The same can be said of the terraced pedestal marked with lotus petals. Maitreya sits in *lalitāsana* pose and draws

hands near his chest in *vyākhyāna mudrā*. Apparently in contemplation, his lips broaden in a faint smile. The image, though rendered in current idiom, is far from tracking the overtrodden path of hardened tradition.

The figure representing Trimurti from Sārnāth[92] stands erect on a *triratha* pedestal (Fig. 78). The composite deity has been voluminously modelled. The broad shoulders, flat chest and the narrow waist of the figure are balanced by massiveness of the lower part of the body. The central head is badly damaged, while each of the slightly elongated side faces shows open eyes with long eye-brows, sharp nose, thick full lips and a pointed chin. The facial expression is sensuous, especially the cheeks. A flowing scarf in the form of a garland passes over his arms. The jewellery is shown in pronounced relief. These include ear-ornaments, necklace, armlets and waistband. Besides, the central figure wears a high boot. There are also two attending divinities with their mounts, a bull and a swan respectively. They are in triple bend flexion and thus offer a contrast to the strictly frontal principal figure. The overall impression of the carvings upon the stela is that of massiveness kindled with vividity.

Coming from the same site, namely, Sārnāth and stylistically of the same class, the sculpture of Indra and his consort[93] reveals a graceful embracing posture (Fig. 79). The figure's sensuousness is not limited to the embracing, but seems to permeate the entire expression. It is revealed in the suave *tribhaṅga* and also in their carnality. The sculpture otherwise shows boldness of carving as noticed in the Trimurti (Fig. 78).

An unfinished image of Śiva shown as slaying the demon Tripurāsura from Sārnāth[94] (Fig. 80) offers a remarkable example of the indomitable vitality of the god. The composition is diagonally disposed and the action shown is the act of slaying. The *ugra* aspect of the god is fully manifest by his moustache and beard and also the manner of wielding of the arms which include sword (*khaḍga*), magic wand topped by a skull (*khaṭvāṅga*), trident (*triśūla*) etc. The demeanour of the god is awesome. The Viṣṇu-Varāha from Allahabad[95] (Fig. 81) is also conceived in the similar spirit and manner. The spatial position occupied by Tripurāsura in the earlier sculpture (Fig. 80) has been taken by the Pṛthvī, the Earth, whom Varāha rescues from deluge in this composition. The same vital force is found to motivate

both the images. The accessory figures of both the panels are carved with matching boldness. The sculpture reminds us of the Bāghārā Viṣṇu Trivikrama (Fig. 64) for compositional affinity.

We have already discussed some *surasundarī*, *gandharva* and *vidyādhara* reliefs coming from Jāmsot (Figs. 56-61). This site also furnishes a number of sculptures[96] representing deities like Śiva[97] (Fig. 82), Brahmāṇī[98] (Fig. 83) and Kārttikeya[99] (Fig. 84) to mention a few. In the treatment of physiognomy they are similar to the said *surasundarī* and *gandharva* figures. But being representations of the deities they are hieratically treated. There of course exist stylistic elements in the treatment of ornaments and physical features which tend to place them in the eleventh century.

The female bust representing Tārā from Sārnāth[100] (Fig. 85) gleams with feminine charm. She holds in her left hand the stalk of a blue lotus in an immaculate gait, her right hand is broken. Her developed rounded breasts are adorned with a flowing beaded necklace, while another, a shorter necklace, is shown encircling her neck. Her big and heavy looking ear-rings are too loud for the delicately modelled face of the deity. Her three-pointed crown bears a tiny effigy of a Buddha in preaching attitude. The most interesting aspect of the image lies in the fact that the figure bears in her countenance an expression noted from the downcast look of her eyes, while the sensitive curves of the lips reveal an untempered sensuousness. The smile permeating the countenance is more earthly than divine. The sculpture no doubt represents the spirit of a deity worshipped by the Mahāyānist Buddhists during the days of *tāntric* domination.[101]

Twelfth Century

The aesthetic vision that developed in the second half of the eleventh century appears to have gained further momentum with the advent of the twelfth. The emphasis on decorative elements is further intensified in sculpture. The pliancy which was the hall-mark of north Indian sculpture in general at least upto the tenth century is completely replaced by hardening of flesh in the body of the images. The chiselling is still precise and painstaking; but the thriving qualities of the forms are missing.

Two Tārā images found from Sārnāth (Figs. 86-87) testify to

the truth of the above observation. One of the two is a four-faced Vajra-Tārā (Fig. 86).[102] The principal face of the image as well as the body upto the waist (the lower part being totally lost) confronting the viewer show the characteristics mentioned above. The facial details such as eye-brows, eye-lash, eye-ball, lips and the double chin are treated with individual but mechanical care though provided with separate plastic volumes. The eyes are still after the lotus-bud ideal, the eye-brows bow-like, and the lips suggesting faint smile; and the overall impression is no doubt humanistic. But, the hardness of form and detail completely dominated the appearance. The hardness in fact is further exaggerated in the delineation of ornaments. An additional weight appears to have been added on the head of the goddess in the form of a number of *dhyānī* Buddhas. But, on the whole, the image of Vajra-Tārā succeeds in creating an impressiveness of its own which may be held as a characteristic of medievalism in the context of the *tāntric* sculptural development. Coomaraswamy[103] says that "the Tārā from Sārnāth has a stange and disquieting beauty. It is both gracious and remote. Each of the four heads has a strongly marked character of its own. Each has to some degree the peculiar smile which has been called archaic but which should rather perhaps be called mystic in Indian art, where it appears even at a late date. The magnificent headdress, with its tiers of Dhyānī Buddhas, reflects the elaboration of Mahāyāna theology."

Similar are the visual values followed by the other Tārā image from Sārnāth[101] (Fig. 87). But here we are fortunate to have her in a somewhat better state of preservation, the arms alone are broken (from the elbow) and the nose, but not the full face is damaged. She stands on a lotus base and is accompanied by a female attendant on her either side. The triple bend posture is fully pronounced adding grace to her physical charm. The same precision and care may be noted here in the treatment of her features and also the ornaments which she wears in abundance. She wears a semi-diaphanous lower garment while the upper portion of the body is bare, fully revealing as it does her developed rounded breasts and the taut navel line. Apart from the ear-rings, double necklace and armlets, she wears a heavy *mekhalā* and *nūpura* which grace the lower part of her body. Here, too, the image is sensually conceived and, in spite of her half-closed meditative eyes, she seems to be a member of the mundane world. But whatever may be her spiritual limitations, this Tārā image is undoubtedly one of the significant creations of the medieval age in northern India. Stylistically, the Tārā images discussed above

may be dated in the twelfth century and have some affinity with the Sārnāth Jambhala-Vasudhārā (Fig. 15).

The Mathurā male torso[105] (Fig. 88) is almost definitely a remnant of a divine form because it shows the *śrivatsa* mark on the chest. The petrification of flesh is here too overt, and despite excellent workmanship, its metallic hardness cannot be hidden. What is remarkable in this sculpture is the over-elaborate ornaments covering all the extant parts of the body that are spared from destruction. The sculptor seems to be more concerned with delineation of intricate designs of ornaments than the plastic aspect of the bare parts of the body. His delight seems to be the decorative appearance and not the essence or warmth of physical charm. The overall impression is that of mechanically and precisely chiselled human as visualised in terms of the idiom of high medievalism. The torso seems to have represented the final stage of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley medieval sculpture. In that sense the head representing Viṣṇu-Viśvarūpa obtained from Uttar Pradesh[106] (Fig. 89) is an aftermath. The decorative ornaments are assuredly there, the high ridged eyebrows are also there, and the background is provided with a conventional lotus halo; nonetheless, the face is vacant of content. Decadence is unmistakably manifest both in the technique of delineating the form and in the mood it expresses.

The image of Siṁhanāda Lokeśvara from Sārnāth[107] seated on a full-blown double-petalled lotus throne placed on a crouching lion is an interesting hieratic sculpture which can be attributed to this period (Fig. 90). A row of full-blown lotuses is shown in high relief to serve as the base of seat on the pedestal. Above the beaded seat upon the lotuses is the crouching lion, the form is highly conventionalised. The upper section of the stela provides figures of five *dhyānī* Buddhas against separate stelas. The shapely Lokeśvara sits in an extremely elegant pose, characteristic of his inconogram. The sensitivity of his rounded arms, broad shoulders, fleshy chest and narrow waist is further enhanced by the fully carved lips, pointed chin and incised neck-lines. In the plastic treatment the composed figure betrays compact tautness, vigour of a first rate dancer. From his soft smile it seems that he is in an extremely self-pleased mood. The undulating beaded thread drooping from his left shoulder speaks of the same pleasant sensation of handsome physical existence. Lokeśvara has a long *jaṭāmukuṭa* and some selective ornaments. The highly conventionalised treatment of the lotuses and the lion is

however indicative of rich bronze-like medieval characteristics. The Siṁhanāda Lokeśvara stands apart from the host of other twelfth century sculptures by virtue of its plastic grandeur.

The Gosainpur (Benaras) Sūrya[108] sculpture (Fig. 91) represents an early stage of the twelfth century sculpture of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley. The composition is laid over a *saptaratha* pedestal. On the stela are a succession of three receding attending figures on either side of the principal deity. Above these attending figures are the usual leogryph on elephant and *makara* motifs. The stela rises in terraces from above the shoulders of the principal form and shows the facade of a *piḍha deul* (*phaṁsanā*) ending with the *ghaṇṭā* and *kalaśa* at the top. The domination of the architectural members in the overall scheme of the stela brings this image close to the Meharauli Viṣṇu image carved in the year A.D. 1147 (Fig. 13). The stela is cut out immediately behind the principal image and the lotus aureole at the back of his head is also found in the medieval Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley sculpture. The static frontage of the god is of course preconditioned by iconic injunctions but the overall treatment of his physiognomy and ornaments shows a clear indication of moribund conventionalisation. The expression of the god is naive and bereft of divine quality. Nevertheless, this image represents competent and disciplined composition.

The *devī* image from Baijnāth[109] (Fig. 92) is stylistically very close to the Meharauli Viṣṇu sculpture (Fig. 13) because in both the cases the stela provides an arched *toraṇa* above the heads of the principal deity. The *devī* image is likewise relieved at the back and stands in *samapada* posture. Her appearance is stiff and formal and the same must be said of the innumerable figures depicted on her sides. The carving here is unsharp and the composition cumbersome; the weight of the *toraṇa* further worsens the aesthetic situation. Guided entirely by the iconographic injunctions, this *devī* icon satisfies the primary requirements of the worshipper. But, notwithstanding the soft treatment of the countenance, it fails to evoke an aesthetic response. It seems that the Gosainpur Sūrya and the Baijnāth *devī* images are representatives of the artistic exhaustion that had started to grip the art tradition of the medieval Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley sometime towards the end of the twelfth century. Kramrisch[110] is right when she says, "As *yantras* they belong to an 'applied art' where value is not connected with artistic quality, it lies in the service which they render to the devotee during *pūjā*."

By far the most elaborate and formally treated sculptural panel of the twelfth century Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley is a Pārvatī-*pariṇaya* panel from Etah[111] (Fig. 93). The entire composition is framed by two flanking pilasters, the central area being occupied by the figures of Śiva and Pārvatī. They are placidly modelled and realistically poised. They appear to be two complementary forms of a single compositional unit set with a background of horizontally arranged bands of figures of various sizes. The facial expressions of the divine figures echo the sanctity of the occasion. Their eye-brows are raised in bow-shape. Their lips are full and the chins are pointed. Śiva looks downwards as if to survey the eyes of Pārvatī, while the latter avoids his eyes in feminine shyness. The figures are elaborately embellished with jewellery and wear semi-diaphanous garments, the folds of the scarf of Pārvatī being indicative of the separate volume. The goddess shows a flat chignon resting on the back of her head. The separate volumes of the ornaments and their considerable elaborations are also noteworthy. The accompanying figures show a predilection for symmetry and orderliness. The flexibility of these figures may also be marked. In the figure of Viṣṇu shown behind Pārvatī or the other figures behind Śiva or the two *dvārapālas* at the extremities of the same row, or the divine or semi-divine figures occasionally riding on their respective mounts, we notice the usual *cliche*. In totality the panel is undoubtedly a *tour de force* among the sculptural pieces of the century.

An interesting group of bracket figures representing *nāyikās* in various stances comes from Jāmsot[112] (Figs. 94-96). These figures are typical representations of twelfth century art as known from other regions of India. Their bodily twists and turns, emphasising their sensuously charm, insufficient clothing but sumptuous ornaments—all point to a medieval idiom in its fullest fervour. The figures are well chiselled but apparently laboured ones and therefore lack the spontaneity and vitality that went behind the similar figures belonging to the earlier periods. The carving is meticulously precise and in places even extremely delicate, for instance, in the delineation of thin lips, sharply drawn eyes and pointed chins. The deeply undercut ornaments speak of the mastery of chiselling. The Jāmsot group is specially noteworthy for offering us the fully developed medieval feminine forms. If one compares this group of figures with those of other figures found from the same place but belonging to the tenth century (Figs. 56-60) earlier discussed, one may be able clearly to discern the stature of the medieval elements growing stronger from

century to century, culminating towards the end of the twelfth century. Chandra has also dated these *nāyikā* sculptures in the twelfth century.[113] We may conclude our study with his observation:

> "This is the time just before the Islamic conquest, when most artistic activity was to come to an abrupt end; but these figures in their hard metallic carving, in their angular and stylised movement, and their somewhat frozen brilliance, display the medieval idiom to perfection, giving no indication of the collapse that was soon to set in."[114]

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68. About Nokhas Rukmiṇī, Zimmer observes: "... the finest rendition of the Hindu conception of womanly beauty among the stone remains of North India. It belongs to the tenth century A.D. and has been tentatively identified and labled as Rukmiṇī, one of the chief wives of Kṛṣṇa, the warlike folk hero and world savior revered as the ninth of the ten avatāras of Viṣṇu. There may exist similar figures that I do not know which show clearly their title to the name Rukmiṇī; or perhaps this figure has been so labeled only because none of the familiar emblems and traits of any other divinity or legendary woman can be found in it. In any case ignorance of the subject detracts nothing from the simultaneously calm and dashing spell that the relief lays upon the beholder. The woman is remarkably tall, and in this respect shares the dignity and grace of the statues of the river goddess from the Rāṣṭrakūṭa period in the temple of Kailāsanātha at Elūrā (Plates 219, 220); as in most Indian female images, the form is nude to the waist. From the hips down it is clad in a diaphanous muslin garment that enhances the delicate contours of the long slender legs, while the metal ornaments of

the rich girdle fastening this garment, descending along the thighs, contrast superbly with the innocent smoothness of the limbs . . .

"The relief, indeed, is not based on sensations of the eye, though the eye is invited to enjoy it. Such an intimate knowledge of the female body could not have been derived mainly from the observation of a standing model or from a recollection of primarily visual impressions. It is the product and expression of the sense of touch, of a devoted familiarity and experience in love, from which an effective intuition has been derived of the secret of the inner life announced in the beauty of forms."

Zimmer, Heinrich, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 128-29.

69. National Museum Cat. No. 67.160.
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71. Allahabad Museum Cat. No. 264.
72. Allahabad Museum Cat. No. 652.
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A RESUME OF THE STYLISTIC EVOLUTION

Eighth century sculptures of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley generally present a simple treatment of the stela. In most cases the stela is of one unit with a plain pedestal, carried upto the top, and framing the entire composition (Figs. 20-22). This type of treatment reminds one of the stela formation of the Gupta period (Figs. 5, 6). The nimbuses are generally lotus petalled and circular in shape. The eighth century sculptures of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley would further show that they are still a part of the aesthetic world that found its best expression in the Gupta art. There are of course digressions particularly in the emphasis on characteristics like volume and linearism (Figs. 21-23), which occasionally disturb the earlier aesthetic vision. This is because somewhere do we find emphasis on linearism and somewhere on volume. But in spite of such digressions, the influence of Gupta classicism is found to be quite active in the eighth century sculptures of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley. However, the expression of spiritual attainment that is especially noticed in the Buddha sculptures of the Gupta age, gradually gets lost sight of. Instead there is a tendency towards the outer world and this can be marked in the most accomplished works brought forth during this century (Figs. 20-23).

By the ninth century a number of stylistic tendencies tend to get manifested in the sculptural works of the region. The *rathaka* projections on the pedestal along with such decorative elements on the stela, namely, floral design of the nimbus, flying *gandharvas* and delineation of clouds that are clearly noticed in the classical Gupta sculptures became more prominent by the ninth century (Fig. 24). In general the sculptures of the period show typical classical feeling for volume and linearism. This will be clear if we refer to the sculptures of Lokanātha and Siddhaikavīra (Fig. 14), Bodhisattva (Fig. 26), the Pārvatī-*pariṇaya* (Fig. 29) and the *Caturmukha* (Fig. 30). An emphasis on flexion may also be found in some of the ninth

century sculptures (Figs. 14, 28), and in this respect they appear to be slightly removed from the classical restraint of the Gupta period. In others one may notice an increasing predilection for ornamentation, a tendency which turns out to be a typical characteristic of the medieval sculpture (Figs. 14, 26, 28). While in some specimens of the century there is a feeling for sharp chiselling (Figs. 24, 26-27, 29), in others a general flabbiness of treatment may also be noted (Fig. 28). In spite of slight dilution of classical values there are a number of pieces belonging to this century (Figs. 14, 25-27, 29-30) which may be marked as significant contributions to the early medieval North Indian art.

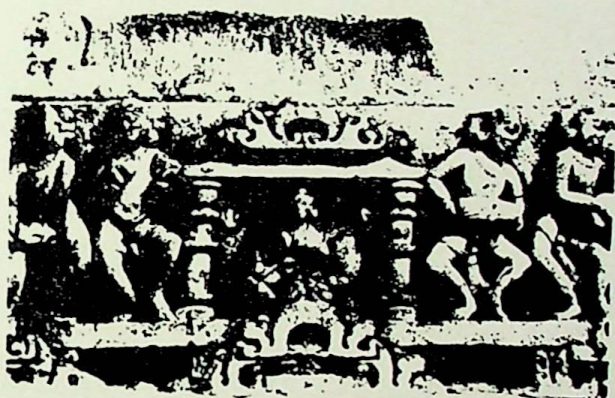
The tenth century sculptures of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley are significant from the point of view of the history of stylistic evolution. The composition of the stela projections on the pedestal varies from *triratha* to *pañcaratha*. The top of the stela is usually semi-circular in shape (Figs. 37, 41-43) but rectangular stelae with pointed apex are not unknown (Figs. 33-34). The shapes and the designs of the aureole present interesting variations. Nimbuses are found to be circular (Figs. 33, 35, 40, 47) or oval (Figs. 31, 44) or even oblong in shape (Fig. 48). So far as their designs are concerned they present full-blown lotus (Figs. 43, 47) or circular nimbus rimmed by beaded borders (Figs. 35, 46). The decorative elements on the stela are on the increase compared to the preceding centuries. Some of the elements that deserve mention are: execution of *siṁhāsana*, decorative cover of the throne (Figs. 30, 32), decorative backrest (Fig. 31), horizontal bar on *makara*, flying *gandharvas*, cloud motifs, designs of the pillars (Figs. 32, 54-55, 62-63), arch motifs (Figs. 62-63) etc. The trends which are marked as medieval in character and noted in the ninth century sculptures are found to be further elaborated and strengthened in this century. The diversification in the proportions of the human figures, in their plastic volume as also in the treatment of their anthropomorphic shapes, are some of the features which one cannot overlook. The feeling for ornamentation witnessed in the ninth century sculptures continued (Figs. 39-41, 44, 47, 51-53, 64). In the stances of some of the sculptures an indication of tension may also be noted (Figs. 45, 54, 64). The classical hold over the human figure, particularly in the images, appears to have become slackened (Figs. 31-32, 35, 37, 39, 40). Besides, the restraint in plastic modelling is also found to be eased and inflated figures are not in wanting (Figs. 38, 43, 47). Among the tenth century sculptures a predilection towards 'medievalism', to be further formulated in the

eleventh-twelfth centuries, is apparent. The sculptures of the early decades of the tenth century show their proximity to the plastic norms associated with the post-Gupta sculptures of the seventh-eighth centuries (Figs. 31, 33, 35, 37-40, 42). But some specimens which may be placed towards the end of the century manifest traits which are found to be further accentuated in the following century (Figs. 54-64). Compositionally speaking, the tenth century sculptures show variety. Some of them are strictly frontal and this is quite expected in the representation of many of the divinities in their prescribed iconic forms (Figs. 46-48). But there are also variegated stances (Figs. 35, 37-38, 44-45, 55-60), some of which appear as surging forth towards the front. The diagonal arrangement of figures also tends to become popular in some later examples of the century and this is no doubt a trait which develops further during the eleventh-twelfth centuries.

In the eleventh century Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley sculptures one may mark a number of characteristic features, some of which were of course making their appearance in the preceding century. The salient features may be summed up as follows. The composition of the stela is generally architecturally conceived. There is multiplication of the *ratha* projections varying from *pañcaratha* to *saptaratha* on the pedestal and they are carried upto the top of the stela (Figs. 69-73). The decorative figural elements, such as *vyālas* and *makara* and non-figural, such as *siṁhāsana*, pavilion, cloud motifs etc., have received prominence. The back slabs of the principal figures are usually cut (Figs. 71, 73-74). The designs and shapes of the aureoles have also undergone various changes (namely, circular, semi-circular, oval etc.). Plastically, however, the eleventh century sculptures show signs of petrification (Figs. 66, 68, 70, 72-73, 78, 81). The earlier plastic roundness, usually noted in the bulging forms of the images, is apparently somewhat restrained. Facial expressions are occasionally lively and sensuous. Various stances of the body from stiff frontal, i.e., *samabhaṅga* to *ābhaṅga*, *tribhaṅga* and *atibhaṅga* are shown according to thematic requirements. The principal forms being mainly cult icons, *mudrās* and *āsanas* are displayed according to canonical prescriptions (Figs. 65-67, 69-70, 72-73, 77). The execution of ornaments on the body of the figures becomes more minute and sophisticated. Such ornaments show separate volumes (Figs. 75-79, 81-85) and seem to be a favourite diversion for the artists who were rather bored by the canonically restricted way of representing the deities. In the arrangement of the composition an awareness for the third

dimension is all through maintained (Figs. 71, 73-74, 78). Further, a movement towards opposite direction, cross-currents and diagonal composition may also be noticed in the eleventh century products (Figs. 80-81).

The stylistic features of the twelfth century Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley sculptures are the logical extension of the eleventh. In the stela formation the *ratha* projections are found to have increased upto the *saptaratha* order. Being architecturally conceived the stela occasionally takes the shape of a *piḍha-deul* (Figs. 13, 91). The cutting of the stela immediately behind the principal figure is to be noted as one of the distinctive features of this century (Figs. 91-93). In the works of this century, petrification of the flesh is more pronounced when compared with the examples of the preceding century. A metallic hardness of the anatomy is noticeable (Figs. 86-88, 90, 92, 94-96). The individual treatment of the different limbs of the body has acquired separate plastic volumes (Figs. 86-92). The sculptures of the eleventh and twelfth centuries were chiefly concerned with producing images, and thus they follow strict iconic injunctions. A greater freedom in plastic realisations finds way in the treatment of the personal ornaments. Emphasis on intricate designs of the jewellery, such as elaborate coiffure, headgear, ear-rings, double-necklace, armlets, waistband, anklets etc., reveals that meticulous attention was given to these by the sculptor (Figs. 15, 86-88, 91-96). In the arrangement of forms both the horizontal and vertical orders are noticed in the twelfth century examples (Figs. 13, 91-92). Twists and turns of the body representing various stances and postures are shown and in most cases they are sensuously conceived (Figs. 94-96). The flexibility of the accompanying figures is a study in contrast to the stiffness of the central hieratic figures of the century. An overall assessment of the twelfth century sculptures of the region would no doubt confirm the fact that during the last phase of our study the sculptures reached a high watermark so far as the technical skill of sculpting went. Seemingly the loss of the spiritual quality of the classical age was made good by the virtuosity in forms.

It is unfortunate that owing possibly to political turmoils prevailing in the region, we get only a few surviving sculptures of the century and still fewer in a good state of preservation. On account of the paucity of complete sculptures in good numbers every small stage in the evolutionary progression cannot be demonstrated.

EPILOGUE

In the preceding chapter an attempt has been made to present a systematic study of sculpture produced in the culture zone over the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley between *c*. A.D. 750-1200. The purpose of the study has been to consider the importance of the region as a centre of significant artistic activity during the medieval period when some extremely interesting and purposeful art forms had been produced by the creative artists of the age. With this object in view a wide survey has been made of a fairly large number of sculptures from the available medieval material of the region.

In the history of Indian art, Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley has a due qualification for special study. This is because the area justifiably is a distinctive cultural zone both from political and socio-religious points of view. We have seen how through the historical developments the region emerged as a political unit under the Gurjara-Pratīhāras. This does not, however, presuppose a watertight compartmentalism or uncompromising regionalism. It is true that the region succeeded in attaining a homogeneity in respect of cultural entity, but, at the same time, this culture-pattern could not escape the influences of contemporary trends coming from the neighbouring regions.

The spirit of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley had been mainly manifest in the endeavour of preserving through assimilation the traditions which were inherited from the Sārnāth and Mathurā schools of the Gupta period. The culmination of earlier religious practices also testifies to the tradition-bound culture of the Valley, a fact which is clearly reflected in the iconic representations of the divinities of various faiths in the period.

Despite the foundations of these trends being embedded in tradition, Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley did not fall behind the flow of the

artistic activity in the contemporary neighbouring regions. Its growing trade and commerce, which extended far beyond its boundaries, helped create an atmosphere for social mobility and religious contacts. Besides the active support of the trading community, religious contacts were further developed by the fluid mobility of pilgrims and the followers of different faiths. Thus an environment conducive to the inflow of culture was created. This explains how this region could overcome its political boundaries and acquaint itself with the contemporary artistic developments. This is evident in the stylistic affinity of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley art with that of the neighbouring regions—Eastern India in particular and Central and Western India in general. Innumerable cult icons obtained from this region appear to have been carved following the textual injunctions. Art to that extent may rightly be characterised as canonical and incidental.

Besides the cult images, one comes across decorative figure sculptures, depicting dance and music scenes, *surasundarīs*, *nāyikās*, *gandharvas*, *vidyādharas*, *dikpālas*, *gana* figures to mention only a few. We have seen that as regards icons a rigorous iconographic discipline as laid down in the relevant texts had to be followed to a considerable extent. The images, as a result, became more or less stereotyped and conventionalised. The *āsanas*, *vāhanas*, *mudrās* and *āyudhas* of the gods and goddesses usually conform to what is laid down in the texts, thereby restricting the scope of the artist in expressing individualism. Nevertheless, in the selection of moods and sentiments, flexions, stances and postures the creative genius of the carver is found to have been expressed in full. On the other hand, as there were no iconic strictures restricting the forms of the decorative figures, the sculptors could utilise the freedom of chisel to work out such forms in accordance with their own conception and imagination. This is fully evident from a number of sculptures where the body no longer obeys the rules of hieratic stiffness. These are shown as twisted and turned in all possible manners. In a number of such sculptures, executed on temple walls and door-jambs, they are found to be vibrant and lively with beaming faces and rhythmic movements. From aesthetic consideration such forms seem more significant than the images of the cult divinities.

Medieval sculpture of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley is not desiccated and decadent as it has been generally supposed to be. An indepth study of the subject would suggest that it has made certain

significant contributions to Indian sculpture. In spite of its ultimate dependence on the formal concepts of the Gupta age, the medieval sculpture of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley had been creative enough to be able to introduce some fresh visual elements of its own in the process of resurgence.

We have already noted the decorative character of this style. Principally, the art is figural where details of the background or setting are kept according to the thematic requirements.

Despite the variety of subjects depicted, the sculptor's dependence on certain traditional conventions, schemata and devices is quite apparent in the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley sculptures. The female leaning on the male was a familiar schema in Indian art through the centuries and was found to be continued in the medieval period. As the divine figures conform to certain basic stereotypes, the use of the schema is even more apparent in the treatment of the animals, especially of their mounts. There is hardly any difference between the lion or a cat (Figs. 65, 66, 69). It was not that the artist did not know the difference between the shapes of these animals. This reliance on convention and their schooling to represent the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar is thus remarkable.

The features noted above are characteristic of medieval sculptures of the region and progressively took shape for creating new aesthetic values within the ambit of Indian art. Besides, in medieval Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley sculptures we sometimes meet with craftsmanship which can be favourably compared with some of the significant products of the preceding ages. It is thus evident that the artistic pursuits of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley region acquired a character of its own and also developed an individuality which can claim for it a significant place in the medieval schools of art.

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